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Disrupting Racial Segregation in Special Education: An Evaluability Assessment of Washington State's Inclusionary Practices Project

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Abstract

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Despite disability advocacy, case law, and legislative attempts to regulate equity in placement, students of color with disabilities are removed from general education settings at higher rates than peers. Ongoing advocacy to extend legal protections and utilize dispute resolution procedures contributed to special education's reputation for being litigious. This study included a recent review of literature on landmark education cases and litigation using a symbolic organization framework to analyze special education placement procedures, disputes, and decisions. The theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and Dis/ability Critical Race Studies offered a critique of special education placement and outcomes and rebutted symbolic responses to persistently discrepant data. A review of promising practices examined

opportunities for engaging culturally and linguistically diverse families in special education placement decisions. The study involved evaluability assessment, a form of program evaluation to analyze design and implementation of Washington state's Inclusionary Practices Project, which provided grant funding and professional development supports to 100 pilot districts. The study helped refine the program theory for the Inclusionary Practices Project and offered conclusions about current implementation and future scalability around three central themes: centering equity, supporting inclusionary practices, and shaping impact. It also supported the identification of next steps for program design evaluation of state-level initiatives.
Keywords: disability, equity, special education, inclusion, inclusive settings, inclusionary practices, least restrictive environment, setting, placement, disproportionality, Critical Race Theory, Dis/ability Critical Race Studies, professional development, evaluability, evaluability assessment, program evaluation, school improvement

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The Inclusionary Practices Project would not have been possible without relentless advocacy from educators, families, advocates, and legislators. I am so excited to be a part of this project and to see its ongoing impact in the lives of students with disabilities.

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CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Hard-fought special education legislation, beginning with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 to the 2004 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), has professed an aim to provide students with disabilities access to public schools and general education settings in particular (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; OSERS, 2010). With these inclusive policies, students with disabilities have experienced aggregate gains through increased graduation rates, postsecondary education access, and integrated employment. However, gaps in these outcomes persist, and equity remains elusive for students of color with disabilities (SOCWD) who consistently experience the highest rates of placement in more restrictive settings (Ferri & Connor, 2006; Skiba et al., 2006; Zion & Blanchett, 2011). Washington state reflects this trend, ranking 44 out of 50 states in 2018 for inclusive practices (National Council on Disability, 2018) and reporting an 8% gap for Black students accessing general education for 80-100% of the school day compared with all students with disabilities (OSPI, 2019-b).

My review of recent literature utilized a symbolic organizational framework (Bolman & Deal, 2008) to analyze racial segregation in special education, including landmark cases, procedures and disputes, and the limited efficacy of policy implementation. The theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the related branch known as Dis/ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit; Annamma et al., 2013) reframed stakeholder critiques of special education placement policy and outcomes, rebutting the symbolic rituals of policies attempting to address discrepant data.

Defining Key Terms

The following sections include definitions of key terms used in this study.

Students of Color with Disabilities (SOCWD)

The term students of color with disabilities (SOCWD) refers to students identified as a federal race or ethnicity other than white who are eligible for and receiving special education services. To maintain a focus on racial equity and disproportionality in special education placement, the term Black students with disabilities is also used.

Inclusion

The study also applies the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (2016) definition of inclusion as systemic changes in instruction and methodology to age-appropriate learning and participation for all students. The Center for Parent Information and Resources (2017) summarizes Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as maximizing a student's access to and instruction with non-disabled peers. The concept of inclusion is the right of each and every student to meaningfully participate in general education settings and interact with non-disabled peers (OSPI, n.d.-c). My usage of the term inclusion centers on the primary focus of Washington's Inclusionary Practices Project, LRE1, which is defined as a student's placement in general education for 80-100% of the school day. The project scope and design are focused on historical trends of inclusion in Washington state, along with the resources and professional development needed for educators to increase successful inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings.

Dual Crises

The duality of the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide protests against systematic, structural racism have intensified the focus on race and disability and their compounding

barriers. To disrupt racial segregation in special education placement, school leaders and educators need resources and training that center meaningful inclusion for students of color with disabilities within the context of the dual pandemics currently impacting the educational system. This evolving situation has impacted all facets of the educational system, including educational research. These impacts on the Inclusionary Practices Project implementation and on this evaluability assessment were addressed throughout the sections that follow.

Evaluability Assessment

This study involved an evaluability assessment of the program design and implementation of Washington state's Inclusionary Practices Project, which provided two years of grant funding and professional development supports to 100 pilot districts. Evaluability assessment (EA) is a type of limited program evaluation intended as an internal review by program managers. Components of evaluability assessment often include a documentation review of program history and design, observations of program functioning, participant input, analysis of the likelihood of realizing program objectives, and conclusions of whether the program design warrants further evaluation (Kaufman-Levy & Poulin, 2003). The evaluability assessment method supported refinement of program theory for the Inclusionary Practices Project, conclusions about current implementation and future scalability, and identification of next steps for program design evaluation of state-level initiatives. This dissertation also contributed to the growing body of literature on evaluability assessment as a research methodology for internal program evaluation.

Literature Review

Literature Review Method

As the long history of over-identifying and disciplining students of color with disabilities is well documented (Artiles et al., 2010; Dunn, 1968; Ferri & Connor, 2006; Ford & Russo, 2016; Skiba et al., 2005), a thorough accounting was beyond the scope of this review. My inquiry focused on the disproportionate placement of SOCWD in more restrictive educational settings. Prominent literature, in the period since the 2004 Reauthorization of IDEA, was reviewed with a focus on the contemporary impact of historic litigation and legislation on special education placement decisions. This review also examined current policies claiming to promote equitable inclusive practices and the troubling consistency of discrepant placement data.

Keywords for the electronic database searches included "disability," "special education," "inclusion," "inclusive settings," "least restrictive environment," "setting," "placement," "disproportionality," "school improvement," "school reform," and "school transformation." Multiple combinations of the search terms identified prominent literature on racial segregation in special education and family engagement in placement decisions. Studies focused on the United States, primarily between 2004 and 2019, in the period since the most recent reauthorization of IDEA. A symbolic theoretical framework supported the synthesis of the methods, findings, and recommendations.

Special Education: Process over Results

Education revels in narratives and metaphors, a theatric organizational structure, and the field of special education is no exception. A symbolic organizational framework relies on myth and faith, rituals and ceremonies, and stories and relationships more than goals and product

(Bolman & Deal, 2008). Applying this symbolic framework to special education, inspiration derives from its actors and their roles. Students with disabilities serve as icons, while legislators and policymakers are ringleaders. Special educators (90% of whom are white) are equal parts saints and martyrs, and building principals are ground zero for any policy success or failure (Blanchett et al., 2005). Parents and advocates persist, as protectors and warriors in a quest for justice, for those with the tools and means to fight (Beratan, 2008; Blanchett et al., 2005). Media has a role to play, as well, drawing out the theatrical courtroom dramas of mothers in tears, represented by eloquent lawyers (Angell & Solomon, 2017). Ongoing advocacy to extend legal protections and utilize dispute resolution procedures to disrupt inequities contributed to special education's litigious reputation.

These battles highlight persistent disparities in access and outcomes, buoyed by a symbolic belief that well-intended rituals and procedures matter more for the process than results (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Connor and Ferri (2007) summarized, "Despite being a field replete with tensions and contradictions, special education is a space of much debate, but little action toward social change" (p. 74). Through all the noise, the public, experts, doctors, parents, and peers continue to label and categorize students with disabilities. Some students are mascots, others are ignored, while those perceived as too difficult, too different, are removed and silenced. Special education often plays the role of peacemaker, absorbing castoffs from general education and maintaining homeostasis in a system that preserves the power of white normative culture (Ferri & Connor, 2006). Disrupting these patterns will require a multi-pronged approach, including professional development, team building strategies, and accountability systems for partners across the educational system to center racial equity in special education placement.

Litigation and Legislation

Dispute Resolution?

The landmark Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the reversal of the separate-but-equal clause of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) paved a path for what would become more than forty years of special education legislation (Blanchett et al., 2005; Cavendish et al., 2014; Ferri & Connor, 2005a; Ferri & Connor, 2006; Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017). Federal special education legislation mandated a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities. FAPE also included provisions to protect rights for disabled students and their parents and incorporated federal special education funding and related monitoring for states (OSERS, 2010). The federal definition of FAPE, unchanged from the original legislative text, has been criticized as being too vague, allowing entrance into public school with little guarantee for high-quality instruction (Yell & Bateman, 2017). This ambiguity has evolved into a lasting legacy of disability activism aimed at meaningful access.

In the decades since the passage of federal special education legislation, a steady quest for access and improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities continued through several key court cases. Case law precedent serves a critical function in cueing states and districts to interpret and implement IDEA requirements (Baratan, 2008). The most impactful and farthest-reaching for students with disabilities, the *Board of Education, Hendrick Hudson v. Rowley* (1982) decision set the standard for educational benefit at barely more than *de minimus* (Maass et al., 2005). Continuing the precedent set in *Board of Education, Hendrick Hudson v. Rowley* (1982), several later cases, including *Hartmann v. Loudoun County Board of Education* (1997) and *Schaffer v. Weast* (2005), reinforced the weight of school district expertise in placement decisions over parental preference (Beratan, 2008; Connor & Ferri, 2007). Sharp

(2002) found that parent engagement and influence in the special education planning process directly correlate to parental knowledge of laws, language, and dispute resolution procedures. Despite inspirational imagery of courtroom victories for disability rights, Maass et al. (2005) found, in a review of placement-related federal appellate court cases, school districts prevailed in 70% of all cases.

The Potential and Perceived Impact of Endrew F.

Into this long line of litigation mythology entered Endrew F., a fifth-grade boy dually diagnosed with Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD; *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, 2017). Endrew had experienced an educational history of limited academic progress and significant behavioral needs in his public-school placement (Prince et al., 2018; Waterstone, 2017; Yell & Bateman, 2017). Endrew's parents sued the district for failure to provide FAPE, and the case moved through the courts, eventually appealed up to the Supreme Court. In its unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the 10th circuit's standard of barely more than *de minimus*. It held that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be reasonably calculated for sufficient progress in light of the student's unique circumstances (*Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, 2017). This updated measure underscored the importance of both parental input and school personnel, acknowledging that the deference paid to educational expertise carries the expectation that school districts defend their decisions (Seligmann, 2017).

For *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (2017), impact thus far appears to be largely in the eye of the beholder; advocates have characterized the decision as groundbreaking, while others see an extension of the status quo, more a difference of degree than kind (Waterstone, 2017). Zirkel (2019) found that, of the 68 FAPE-related circuit court cases since the

Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District (2017) decision, school districts have prevailed in over 70% of cases, identical to previous rates. As the field observes the unfolding of ongoing courtroom dramas, policymakers, school leaders, and families must navigate partners' varied expectations regarding placement and student progress.

Elusive Equity within Policy and Data

Despite mixed courtroom victories, consensus among special education advocates emerged over the legal and social necessity of inclusive education for students with disabilities (Connor & Ferri, 2007). Research into inclusive practices has shown positive academic, social, and long-term benefits for students with disabilities of all backgrounds and types, and positive or neutral impact for students without disabilities (Artiles et al., 2010; McCart et al., 2014; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). Skiba et al. (2006) found that, between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of students with disabilities educated primarily in general education settings increased by 87%, while students placed in separate facilities fell over 15% during the same period. Continuing the historical pattern of disproportionality in special education identification, these academic and social gains in access were not universally realized: Black students with disabilities, regardless of disability category, were more likely to be placed in restrictive settings, less likely to be educated in general education settings, and most likely to be placed in separate educational facilities (Annamma et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2008; Zion & Blanchett, 2011). Because of the correlation between removal from general education and lower achievement levels, opinion among some experts has held that segregated placements may be more impactful for students with disabilities than identification or eligibility category (McLeskey et al., 1999; Skiba et al., 2006).

As public narrative increased the focus on inclusive practices and greater equity, federal policymakers added requirements to address discrepant placement data for SOCWD (Beratan,

2008; Cavendish et al., 2014; Kramarczuk Voulgarides et al., 2017; Skiba et al., 2008). More than a decade after the 2004 Reauthorization of IDEA, current data follow the same disproportionate patterns. According to a multi-year analysis on disproportionality from OSERS (2016), between 2011 and 2014, SOCWD were over four times more likely than the larger disabled student population to be removed from the general education setting for more than 20% of the school day. The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) data indicate special education placement in general education settings lags behind the percentage of students with disabilities identified as having average or above-average intelligence (2019). This placement gap, which is even greater for SOCWD with disabilities in Washington, is addressed in more detail in the following section. In summary, SOCWD continue to be removed from general education settings at higher rates than their peers despite the advocacy of parents and experts, the influence of case law and legislation, and well-intended attempts to regulate equity considerations in policy. Legal remedies and policy revisions have not led to a disruption of these gaps in access for SOCWD; therefore, discussions must go deeper to uncover the structural foundations behind segregated placements in special education.

Special Education Data in Washington State

Washington state collects special education data annually from school districts and reports these data to the federal Office of Special Education Programs, receiving an annual state determination level. Based on a combination of compliance and results indicators, determination levels are meets requirements, needs assistance, needs intervention, or needs substantial intervention (U.S. Department of Education, 2020-c). Despite consistent compliance rates at or near 100%, Washington state has received a determination rating of needs intervention for several years due to a results rating closer to 50% (U.S. Department of Education, 2020-a).

Compliance indicators include monitoring and oversight, correction of noncompliance, and timeliness and accuracy of data; results indicators reflect student outcomes, including statewide assessments and graduation and dropout rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2020-b). These trends demonstrate that a focus on procedural compliance is insufficient to improve outcomes for students with disabilities; educational systems must focus on results.

I compared the most current data from the 20 most and 20 least inclusive K-12 systems in Washington state with state special education averages for least restrictive environment (LRE), proficiency on statewide assessments, graduation rates, and post-school engagement. Table 1 compares state averages for outcome data for students with disabilities in districts reporting the highest and lowest inclusion rates, defined as students with disabilities placed in general education settings for 80-100% of the school day. The profile data for these two groups of school districts show that the most inclusive districts represent about a third of the enrollment size of the less inclusive districts. Despite this difference in population size, other factors revealed more parity. Both groups were represented statewide, across nearly every regional educational service district (ESD). The percent of SOCWD was 39% in the more inclusive group compared with 46% in the less inclusive. The percent of students identified as low income was 52% in the more inclusive group compared with 56% in the less inclusive.

Table 1

Special Education Outcomes in Washington's Most and Least Inclusive Districts

	2020 LRE 80-100% for Students with Disabilities	2020 LRE 80-100% for Black Students with Disabilities	2018-19 High School Proficiency Rates		2018-19 Graduation Rates		2018-19 Post-School Engagement Rate
			English-Language Arts	Mathematics	Special Education Graduation Rate	Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA)[a] Rate	
State Special Education	60.0%	52.7%	22.5%	5.6%	62.1%	74.1%	74.7%
Most Inclusive Districts	85.7%	85.2%	21.5%	13.3%	85.2%	64.9%	79.2%
Least Inclusive Districts	44.5%	39.0%	20.8%	5.7%	68.8%	74.0%	64.9%

Note. These K-12 data were analyzed using *Washington State Special Education Performance Data FFY2019* and *Washington State Report Card*, by Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2021.

[a] Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) was a graduation alternative in Washington state based on modified criteria, available only to students with disabilities through the graduating class of 2021 (OSPI, n.d.-a). A lower CIA rate means that a higher percentage of students with disabilities graduated at grade-level standard.

The data displayed in Table 1 highlight several patterns. I compared LRE1 (access to general education for 80-100% of the school day) for students with disabilities and Black students with disabilities for state data and in the most and least inclusive school districts. The most inclusive districts reported a rate for LRE1 25.7% higher than the state average, while the least inclusive districts reported a rate that was 15.5% lower. The gap in placement access for

Black students with disabilities compared with all students with disabilities was 7.3% statewide, 0.5% in the more inclusive group, and 5.5% in the less inclusive group.

Special education outcome data were also reviewed. The most current high school proficiency rates were from 2018-19, as accountability assessments were not administered in 2019-20 due to COVID and school facility closures. For the data available, both the most and least inclusive districts reported high-school proficiency rates for English-language arts (ELA) just below the state average of 22.5%. Data for the more inclusive group should be interpreted with caution, as some of the district results were suppressed due to small n size. For math, the less inclusive group reflected the state average, and the more inclusive group reported a high school proficiency rate 7.7% higher than the state average. Regardless of the percentage differences among these three groups, students with disabilities across all eligibility categories continue to perform below the proficiency rates for students without disabilities (OSPI, 2021-c).

Graduation and post-school outcomes are critical indicators for students with disabilities, and the data show greater differences among the three groups. I reviewed the graduation rate for students with disabilities, as well as the percentage of graduates accessing the Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA), a graduation alternative in Washington state based on modified criteria, available only to students with disabilities through the graduating class of 2021 (OSPI, n.d.-a). A lower CIA rate means that a higher percentage of students with disabilities graduated at grade-level standard. The state reported a 2018-19 special education graduation rate of 62.1%; of that group of graduates, 74.1% earned their diploma through the modified standards of the CIA. For the least inclusive school districts, 68.8% of students with disabilities graduated, and 74% pursued the CIA path. The most inclusive school districts reported a special education graduation rate of 85.2%, over 23% higher than the state average, with a CIA rate of 64.9%,

more than 9% lower than the state CIA rate. These graduation data are especially important when considering that the CIA was no longer available after the class of 2021 (OSPI, n.d.-a).

Post-school data are a measure of engagement for students with disabilities one year after leaving the school system. Engagement includes multiple definitions of employment or education and training (Center for Change in Transition Services, 2021). The most current post-school engagement data show a state average of 74.9%, with the more inclusive group reporting a rate 4.5% higher than the state average and the less inclusive group reporting a rate 10% lower than the state average. In reviewing longitudinal career preparation data for students with disabilities in Washington state, Theobald et al. (2019) uncovered similar trends. The study found that students with disabilities in Washington who completed a series of concentrated career and technical education (CTE) courses showed higher post-graduation employment rates. These results were highest for students placed in general education for 80-100% of the school day.

Washington state's special education placement data and outcomes should be interpreted as an urgent call to action. Although inclusion in general education is not the only systems change needed, it is an important component for social justice and opportunity, in school and beyond. I also want to clearly state that I believe meaningful inclusion in community settings is a civil right; that priority should be reflected across the educational system. The literature review highlighted that equity and inclusion provide value for our society, including and beyond academic outcomes. The section that follows offers a framework for interpreting and disrupting inequitable trends in special education placement data highlighted in the literature review and that exist in Washington state.

Theoretical Framework

Partners and experts in various fields across education and policy, disability studies, and multicultural studies have attributed different causes for persistent rates of restrictive special education placements. The emerging theoretical framework of Dis/ability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit), a branch of Critical Race Theory (CRT; Annamma et al., 2013), provides a lens for critiquing racial segregation in special education. CRT posits that race must be centered in any authentic discussion of educational equity (Ladson-Billings, 1998), and DisCrit adds that the intersection of race and disability presents unique, multidimensional experiences of systemic oppression (Ben-Moshe & Magaña, 2015; Delgado et al., 2017). These frameworks reject the symbolic rituals of special education's approach to addressing disproportionality: in analyzing the oppression of racism and ableism, "intentions are irrelevant and there is a need to focus on outcomes" and policies in action (Beratan, 2008, p. 346). CRT tenets offer race-conscious rationale behind ongoing racial segregation in special education placements.

Colorblind federal policies, paired with color-conscious state and local practices that exclude SOCWD and their families, sustain racialized segregation in special education. In federal policy, maintaining focus on the technical aspects of placement data collection can mask analysis of historical and racial contexts of placement decisions (Cavendish et al., 2014). Research approaches contribute to this phenomenon through the division of expertise into the fields of psychology, pedagogy, disability studies, and ethnic studies. These professional separations limit more holistic views of special education exclusion in favor of one-dimensional analyses, such as the debate of race versus poverty as a primary factor for poor special education outcomes (Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Skiba et al., 2005). Educators and evaluators contribute to clinical implementation, narrowing the focus to individual needs defined as deficient from the

white normative student population (Reid & Knight, 2006). According to both administrators and parents, IEP case managers are expert voices in placement decisions, although studies have found that special educator mindset can be a barrier to inclusive practices (Whitford & Addis, 2017).

Utilizing the CRT concept of retrenchment (the process by which systems move to nullify gains in civil rights), Beratan (2008) connected the rise of special education, and segregation of students by ability, as a secondary response to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Although policies no longer systematically separate children by race and ethnicity, level of ability, including skill deficit, is often a rationale for segregation. The conflation of race and disability has resulted in schools repackaging segregation by race into segregation by ability, presented as a benevolent response to individual student needs. Regardless of intent, the impact nonetheless results in removing SOCWD from general education settings (Ferri & Connor, 2005b; Reid & Knight, 2006; Zion & Blanchett, 2011). DisCrit maintains that the very form and function of these symbolic discussions camouflage the underlying racial structures that inform placement decisions. This framework rejects blaming school failure on individuals and families instead of critiquing systemic social, political, and economic contexts (Annamma et al., 2014; Delgado et al., 2017). Erevelles and Minear (2010) employed the CRT and DisCrit tenet of voice (Annamma et al., 2013) to highlight these injustices through Cassie's story. In a tale far too common for SOCWD, Cassie recounted an educational career of school failure, restraint and expulsions, changing disability labels, and sexual exploitation—despite her mother's attempts to advocate and stay involved. This destructive pattern was broken only through the witness of an advocate who uncovered the district's legal exposure (Erevelles & Minear, 2010). Cassie's powerful voice, through the retelling of her own experiences, highlights a misalignment among

policy intentions, implementation, and results, along with a firsthand account of the important and persistent role of disability advocacy.

My Positionality in Disrupting Racial Segregation in Special Education

I must acknowledge my positionality culturally, professionally, and within the context of the educational system. I am the child of a formerly undocumented immigrant from Central America, and I was also a high school dropout before pursuing higher education within the community college system. Disability, as a concept, was largely absent from my childhood, limited to a nebulous awareness of the "short bus" that transported unseen students to a centralized building. Personal challenges and disengagement from school were factors in my dropping out of high school, followed by a cross-country journey from my hometown in New York to California. That fresh start included community college, where a professor recommended me as a tutor to support classmates. My affinity for tutoring evolved to working with younger students, then, after graduation, running an afterschool tutoring center. Thus, my formal introduction to special education began, working with culturally and linguistically diverse families who, in the face of severely limited resources, prioritized tutoring for their struggling children with disabilities.

As a tutor and family contact, I was often invited to participate in individualized education program (IEP) meetings, but as an outsider to the school system, I felt limited in my ability to advocate for students. Thus, despite a youthful pledge that I would never be a teacher, despite my own experiences with school failure, I started down the path toward special educator. The transition fit, and I felt I had found a calling in supporting students who, for a variety of reasons, did not fit the mold. I had been teaching in the field for nearly a decade when my son was diagnosed with Autism; the experience of sitting on the other side of the IEP table was quite

an adjustment. It is an experience that has brought intense empathy as an educator. My appointment as Washington state Director of Special Education added additional perspective and influence. As a daughter, a mother, and an educator, I am committed to bringing a sense of urgency throughout this pandemic, during which I have observed decreasing access to equity and inclusion in special education.

Though I consider myself both an advocate and a family member of someone in the disability community, I do not have firsthand experience with disability. While most of the regulations governing special education are federally mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), I play a role in sustaining it by choosing to work within that system. I feel pulled between the demands of compliance, funding, and doing what is right for students through an inclusive, strengths-based frame. Through my position, I have considerable influence in promoting asset-based language and challenging my colleagues to develop special education programming focused more on what students can do than what they cannot. It is important to me that my actions, and my impact, are aligned with my intent. I will continue to leverage this microphone I have been granted to support inclusive access and equitable outcomes for students of color with disabilities and their families.

CHAPTER 2: EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT DESIGN

Evaluability assessment (EA) is a type of limited program evaluation intended as an initial internal review by program managers. The Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center (Kaufman-Levy & Poulin, 2003) outlined components of evaluability assessments, which could include a documentation review of program history and design, observations of program functioning, participant input, analysis of the likelihood of realizing program objectives, and conclusions of whether the program design warrants further evaluation. This chapter provides context and rationale for the Inclusionary Practice Project, along with the benefits of conducting an EA of this initiative.

Background and Relevance

Zion and Blanchett (2011) suggested that an increasing focus on equity in the field of education offered an opportunity to bring race into the dialogue of serving all students and students of color with disabilities (SOCWD), in particular. A spotlight on race and disability arrived in Washington State with the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015), requiring redirection of resources toward improved outcomes for underserved student groups, including SOCWD (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; OSPI, 2018). Over two-thirds of the 900 schools targeted statewide for support include students with disabilities performing below the threshold, based on multiple measures such as proficiency, growth percentiles, attendance, and advanced course-taking options (OSPI, n.d.-e). According to the National Council on Disability (2018), Washington State is in the lowest quintile nationwide for inclusive practices in schools. As previously discussed, special education outcomes for Washington state's most inclusive districts demonstrate, for the most part, improved outcomes over the least inclusive districts and state averages (see Table 1). ESSA's impetus for

reexamining special education data across multiple levels has spotlighted special education segregation and opportunity gaps in Washington State.

Problem of Practice Statement

Inclusion is the belief that all students have a right to meaningfully participate in their communities, both academically and socially (OSPI, n.d.-c). Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) data are collected and reported annually in multiple measures; LRE1 includes the percentage of students with disabilities placed in the general education setting for 80 to 100% of the school day. The body of research on inclusion and Washington state's demographic data show that 85-90% of students with disabilities can progress in grade-level curriculum with appropriate supports (Hodge, 2016; OSPI, 2019-b). Despite this, 56.6% of students with disabilities in Washington State accessed general education in LRE1 as of 2018; for Black students with disabilities in Washington, access to LRE1 was even lower, at 49% (OSPI, 2019-b). Students with disabilities, regardless of their abilities or race and ethnicity, should not have to 'earn their way' into inclusive learning environments.

Context for the Study

In 2019, the Washington State Legislature allocated $25,000,000 over two years for professional development in support of inclusionary practices, with an emphasis on coaching and mentoring supports for educators working in public schools with the lowest levels of inclusion statewide (OSPI, n.d.-c). Examples in the literature of inclusive systems approaches have focused on collaborative teacher preparation programs, diversity and disability training in principal leadership, and financial resources for schools to support inclusive practices (Francis et al., 2016; Hirano et al., 2018; Hodge, 2016; McCart et al., 2014). OSPI Special Education leadership collaborated with a variety of partners to launch the Inclusionary Practices Project.

Initial planning activities included defining project goals, drafting a theory of action (OSPI, n.d.-d) and logic model with change drivers (OSPI, n.d.-b), and developing multiple project partnerships to reduce segregated placements in special education. Pilot district participation included 246 public schools in 100 school districts across the state, serving more than 20,000 students with disabilities. The Participants and Sampling section includes additional information about the pilot district cohort.

Evaluability Assessment: Overview and Rationale

Joseph Wholey (1979) originally introduced EA as a program evaluation approach, and EA has evolved from a pre-evaluation tool into broader use for ongoing program monitoring (Trevisan & Walser, 2015). Conventional program evaluation designs often involve outside evaluators and include additional costs and time compared with internal reviews. Sometimes called exploratory evaluation, EA has long had broad international application in public health for evaluating program design, including cost-benefit analyses and feasibility measures (Levitan et al., 2010).

Results from an EA design can support the development of a program theory or refinement of an existing model. EAs can also inform conclusions about current implementation and scalability, suggestions for revising program design, and next steps for program evaluation (Trevisan & Walser, 2015). I conducted this EA during the two-year project to gather direct feedback from project participants and inform ongoing project design and improvement. While the legislative proviso language for this grant funding focused on inclusion for all students with disabilities, CRT and DisCrit provide a framework for centering racial equity across all educational initiatives, including the Inclusionary Practices Project. This EA design included a

critical analysis approach through an iterative process with partners, including input from families directly impacted by segregated placement decisions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my evaluability assessment (EA) approach is primarily to provide formative assessment information of Washington State's Inclusionary Practices Project, exploring real-time evidence of whether the project is likely to result in disrupting racial segregation in special education. The process of including partner input, including parent interviews, as both a data source and evaluation contributor helped weight the voices of groups historically silenced in placement decisions. This EA contributed to organizational learning, increasing state agency capacity for internal program evaluation for this project and future initiatives. The EA also helped identify systems conditions for implementing inclusionary practices. Another purpose for the EA served to contribute to the research on EA for program development evaluation through a critical lens.

Research Questions

1. *How likely is the design of the Inclusionary Practices Project to disrupt racial segregation in special education?*
2. *What are participants' reflections of the impact of the Inclusionary Practices Project on individual placement decisions for SOCWD?*

Research Design and Approach

Description of EA Design

The qualitative EA design included four primary components, as outlined by Trevisan and Walser (2015): (a) focusing the EA, (b) refining the project theory, (c) gathering partner input on the project theory and design, and (d) identifying steps for utilizing the results of the

EA. Focusing the EA involved identifying the scope of the EA and the activities required to answer the research questions. Refining the project theory included a document review and analysis of the project design. Pilot district year-end reports provided direct partner input, along with phone interviews with four families of students with disabilities in two case study districts. For transparency and continuous improvement, I provided regular updates on EA activities, findings, and recommendations to OSPI leadership and external project partners. I also shared the draft results of the parent interview with the four families and invited them to provide feedback before submission.

Design Advantages

The documentation review component provided flexibility in timing and resource allocation for conducting the EA. Because the Inclusionary Practices Project design required year-end reports from pilot participants for each year of the initiative, the timing and frequency of partner documentation were predictable. Interviewing selected parents over the phone helped to control costs while netting valuable input. Additionally, these data were collected and analyzed across multiple sources and methods, supporting data accuracy standards for validity, reliability, and sound design (Trevisan & Walser, 2015).

Design Limitations

School district special education directors were the primary contributors of pilot participant documentation on behalf of district and school teams. This approach provides a particular lens to the written partner input. Voices of school administrators, educators and staff, and families and students are indirectly represented in the reports, making direct parent input all the more critical.

Role of the Researcher

An EA is an internal tool for project development, and I conducted this study as the principal investigator. My data collection and analysis included completing the document review and project theory analysis, along with the phone interviews with parents.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS FOR FOCUSING THE EA

This chapter details the methods for focusing the EA to answer the research questions of whether the project design would disrupt racial segregation in special education and impact student placement decisions. The EA activities and measures focused on inclusionary practices that centered racial equity, family engagement, and student voice.

Participants and Sampling

Population

Pilot districts were initially invited to participate in the two-year Inclusionary Practices Project based on a review of statewide placement data. The primary data analysis compared districts with LRE2, students with disabilities accessing general education for 40-79% of the school day, higher than LRE1, students with disabilities accessing general education for 80-100% of the school day. Additional districts were added to the pilot by district request as part of a secondary recruitment phase.

Parent interviews were conducted with four families during year 2 of the project, including parents of two SOCWD. I focused on two case study pilot districts that increased LRE1 more than 25% from the 2018 baseline to 2020. District A was a small, rural school district in northwestern Washington reporting an increase in LRE1 of 39.4% from baseline, and District B was a large school district in southeastern Washington reporting an increase in LRE1 of 25.2% from baseline.

Sample Method and Size

The pilot cohort included 246 public schools in 100 school districts across the state, serving more than 20,000 students with disabilities. School size ranged in total student enrollment from 20 to over 2,600 students. Of the 20 most and 20 least inclusive systems in

Washington state identified in Table 1, two of the most inclusive and 14 of the least inclusive school districts participated in the pilot. As pilot district recruitment was based on district LRE data and targeted in systems with lower inclusion rates, this participation ratio aligned with the project goals. I also conducted phone interviews with four parents of students with disabilities, including two SOCWD, in the two case study school districts.

Selection Criteria

Inclusion criteria for inviting districts and schools focused initially on systems with LRE2 higher than LRE1. Additional identifying factors included school selection for ESSA supports and district-level significant disproportionality data for identification, placement, or discipline of SOCWD. As part of a secondary recruitment phase, additional districts self-selected as pilot participants. Project leadership considered then rejected setting a minimum school n-size for students with disabilities as exclusion criteria.

I invited parents of students with disabilities, including students of color with disabilities, to talk with me by phone about their perspectives on inclusion. The selection process for families in the two case study districts included 150 parents of students with disabilities in preschool through twelfth grade for whom OSPI had email and mailing addresses. Invitations for interviews included mailed letters and emails provided in English and Spanish and included an option for live interpretation, as needed. Of the 150 parents invited, four responded; three from District A and one from District B.

Sampling Bias Discussion

Districts and schools were initially recruited to participate in the pilot based on lower inclusion rates. District participation was voluntary, and not all invited districts elected to participate in the pilot. After the initial recruitment phase, additional participants were added to

the pilot by district request. Of the twenty least inclusive systems in Washington state, fourteen elected to participate in the pilot.

Parents from two case study districts were invited to participate in phone interviews to share their perspectives on inclusion. Invitations were extended by phone and email to 150 families, and four responded and participated in the interview process. Although that is a small sample size, the family demographics included two SOCWD and grades that spanned PreK, elementary, middle, and high, and the case study districts represented Eastern and Western Washington, including both a large and a small, rural community.

Protection of Human Subjects

Pilot district reports and my parent interview notes were stored in a secure online filing system in compliance with OSPI security protocols. To support informed consent, I sent invitations to participate in phone interviews in English and Spanish, and live phone interpretation was available but not requested. Responses were anonymized to preserve individual confidentiality. I received an exemption from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research at the University of Washington, Tacoma. IRB granted the exemption reviewing the current study, with the condition that I follow all procedures initially outlined in the IRB application, including the use of the parent interview protocol (see Appendix F). For transparency and to ensure that I had accurately represented the information shared during parent interviews, I shared with all four parent interview participants the draft of the Results section specific to parent interviews. I invited them to provide input before submission. The families expressed gratitude and did not provide any suggested edits.

Data Collection

Statewide and district placement data for students with disabilities are collected and published online annually. Baseline LRE data informed the pilot district selection process, and I reviewed annual placement data updates across pilot districts. Table 2 demonstrates the percent change in inclusion levels from the 2018 project baseline to 2020 for the state and pilot districts. Measures include LRE1, LRE2, and LRE3, along with the 2021 targets and the percent change from baseline to 2020.

Table 2

Placement Data from 2018 to 2020 for Washington State and Pilot Districts

Level of Inclusion in General Education	Data Group	2018 Baseline	2019 Update	2020 Update	2021 Target	% Change from Baseline
LRE1 (80-100% of day):	State	56.6%	57.7%	60.0%	60.0%	+ 3.40%
	SOCWD	53.5%	54.5%	56.9%	N/A	+ 3.40%
	Pilot	44.2%	49.1%	55.5%	50.0%	+ 11.30%
LRE2 (40-79% of day):	State	29.2%	28.4%	26.3%	27.0%	- 2.9%
	SOCWD	31.7%	31.1%	28.8%	N/A	- 2.9%
	Pilot	46.2%	38.3%	33.1%	41.0%	- 13.10%
LRE3 (0-39% of day):	State	12.8%	12.4%	12.2%	11.0%	- 0.6%
	SOCWD	13.6%	13.3%	13.1%	N/A	- 0.5%
	Pilot	11.7%	11.5%	10.3%	10.5%	- 1.40%

Note. Progress for this initiative is demonstrated by increasing LRE1 and decreasing LRE2 and LRE3 as students gain access to less restrictive settings. Project targets were not set for SOCWD. These K-12 data were analyzed using *Washington State November 2020 Federal Child Count*

and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Data, by Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/specialed/data/pubdocs/LRE_CC_2020_21_State_Summary.xlsx) and *LRE Trend Data by District 2018–2020*, by Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/specialed/inclusion/WA-LRE-Trend-Data-by-District-2018-2020.xlsx). In the public domain.

The document review included analysis of the project's theory of action, logic model and driver diagram, webpage, and pilot application. An evaluability assessment checklist (see Appendix D) was adapted from models used by the United Nations Programme Development (UNDP) Independent Evaluation Office (2019) and the Department for International Development (Davies, 2013). Checklist questions explored evidence of a theory of change, measurable goals and indicators, protocols for addressing unintended consequences or developments, and sufficient resource allocation. Partner input included year-end reports from the 100 pilot districts (see Appendix E), along with responses from four parent phone interviews (see Appendix F). The year-end report protocol for pilot districts and the parent interview protocol helped measure project impact aligned to the project theory of action and the logic model and driver diagram.

Data Analysis

The Results section that follows summarizes the EA checklist responses and data collection coding for partner input. Data analysis procedures included entering participant responses into MAXQDA software to code responses to open-ended questions posed to pilot districts through the year-end report protocol (see Appendix E) and in phone interviews with parents of students with disabilities from two case study districts (see Appendix F). Responses

were coded from pilot districts and parent interviews using an inductive coding process common to EA design. A pattern theory approach was applied to code participant responses into categorical themes by topic, emphasizing the focus of the EA (Trevisan & Walser, 2015). The MAXQDA software calculated the frequency and percentages of coded responses within each topic area. This coding method and inductive analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) revealed three central themes for analyzing the Inclusionary Practices Project design and answering the research questions for this EA: centering equity, supporting inclusionary practices, and shaping project impact. Recommendations for improving project design and implementation, aligned to these central themes, are addressed in the Discussion section.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This EA design included four primary components, including focusing the EA, refining the project theory through documentation review, gathering partner input on project theory and design, and identifying steps for utilizing the EA results. Building on the previous section that focused the EA, this chapter presents the results of the documentation review, the EA checklist, and partner input.

Refining the Project Theory

I reviewed all public-facing project materials to identify the extent to which the project design and resources reflected the theory of action.

Document Overview

The Inclusionary Practices Project website (OSPI, n.d.-c) was the primary source for the document review. The webpage structure focused on project design, resources and research, data updates, pilot information, and professional development resources.

Project Design

The project design section opened with definitions of inclusion, including LRE measures, legislative foundations, best practices across multi-tiers systems of support (MTSS), universal design for learning (UDL), specially designed instruction (SDI), culturally responsive teaching, and the importance of coaching and mentoring supports for implementation. Information follows about the project theory of action and logic model and driver diagram.

Inclusionary Theory of Action. The project webpage included an Inclusionary Theory of Action (OSPI, n.d.-d; Appendix A), developed in collaboration with partners by applying a data analysis process to identify problems of practice relating to inclusion. The theory of action identified the necessary conditions to support inclusion across settings and partners to design and

sustain inclusive learning environments, including measurable and observable outcomes. The theory of action stated that students and families were at the center of the project design, emphasizing "students of color and groups who have traditionally been denied a voice in decision making" (OSPI, n.d.-d, p. 1). Specific examples and strategies were listed under each partner group, including students, families, educators, and school and district leaders (see Appendix A).

Inclusionary Logic Model and Driver Diagram. Partners across content areas also helped develop the Inclusionary Logic Model and Driver Diagram (OSPI, n.d.-b; Appendix B). The premise of the logic model was that statewide training and support to target audiences across project priority areas would enable educators to provide more inclusive core instruction in general education settings, resulting in higher rates of inclusion, graduation, proficiency, and other measures of school quality and student success for students with disabilities. The project targets included a statewide increase in LRE1 from the 2018 baseline measure of 56.6% to 58-60% by the spring of 2022. Primary drivers included (a) demonstration sites to showcase exemplar schools where inclusion is working; (b) pilot districts, the primary focus of this EA, receiving grant funds to increase inclusion; (c) statewide professional development supports; (d) inclusion supports for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities; and (e) family engagement supports. Secondary drivers provided more detailed focus areas (see Appendix B), such as peer relationships, mentoring, and social/emotional learning (SEL). The logic model and driver diagram did not specifically address racial equity nor students of color with disabilities, addressed in more detail in the discussion section (see Chapter 5).

Research and Resources on Inclusion

The project webpage also included a compilation of research articles and online resources to support inclusionary practices. Areas of focus included supports for virtual and remote learning for students with disabilities, online professional development trainings, needs assessments for individuals and school systems, and leadership resources for school and district administrators. Although there was no section on racial equity nor the intersectionality of race and disability, several resources addressed disproportionality in identification, placement, or discipline, along with diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations.

Pilot District Information

Posted information for and about pilot districts addressed the scope of the pilot, including the number of districts, schools, and students with disabilities in the pilot cohort. The pilot district webpage provided information on applying to be a pilot district, with links to the various application forms. The application process included an online grant application and a Pilot District Action Plan (see Appendix C). Once the application process was approved, all pilot district teams were required to complete a District LRE Self-Assessment (OSPI, 2019-a), a tool adapted from a WestEd (2005) resource.

District Action Plan. The Pilot District Action Plan (see Appendix C) guided pilot districts through each stage of the Inclusionary Practices Project, from planning and approval to budgeting and implementation. Action Plan components addressed targeted schools, district and building leadership teams, project needs and goals, an activities map for budgeting, and an implementation timeline. The plan included prompts about family and community engagement, racial equity, and language access and development. Resources included sample activities with

links to data sources for disaggregating placement data by race/ethnicity, language development, and other factors.

District LRE Self-Assessment. The District LRE Self-Assessment Tool (OSPI, 2019-a) was a required activity to support district teams with "policies, practices, and initiatives that are consistent with and support the LRE requirements of federal and state law as well as effective research- and practice-based LRE strategies" (p. 1). The tool was organized around five overarching domains to support inclusion: vision and leadership, policies and procedures, services and implementation, accountability measures, engagement and collaboration, and staffing. Teams assign a rating from one, never, to five, all of the time, across multiple items, and the tool auto-calculates a score for each domain. Teaming activities focus on collaborative problem solving and action planning.

The 78 items in the self-assessment tool were coded for the focus areas of this EA, including student voice, racial equity, and family engagement. Ten items included considerations for family engagement, while student voice and racial equity were addressed two times each across the entire resource. As a comparison, nine items addressed physical access to classrooms and learning environments. Table 3 shows an excerpt from the District LRE Self-Assessment Tool with items from the engagement and collaboration domain.

Table 3

Excerpt on Engagement from the District LRE Self-Assessment

Ratings: 5 = All of the Time 4 = Most of the Time 3 = Some of the Time 2 = Rarely 1 = Never			
Components and Features of LRE: Domain V. Teachers, parents & students working together for better student results	Rating	Evidence to Support Rating	Improvement Activities
V.2 Parents are embraced as equal partners and fully involved in their child's educational program.			
a. The district encourages and implements outreach efforts for all parents to facilitate effective service delivery including LRE supports for their children. Parental input regarding effective adaptations and accommodations is solicited.			
b. District-wide, parents are included in all components of the IEP process.			
c. The district provides ongoing support to schools in their implementation of strategies for fully involving parents and embracing them as equal partners in the educational process for their child.			
d. The district provides ongoing training, information and support for parents that considers and is respectful of cultural and language diversity.			
V.3 Students are involved in their IEP/LRE discussions.			
a. The district provides ongoing support to schools in their implementation of strategies for effectively involving students in the educational process, including their IEP meetings.			

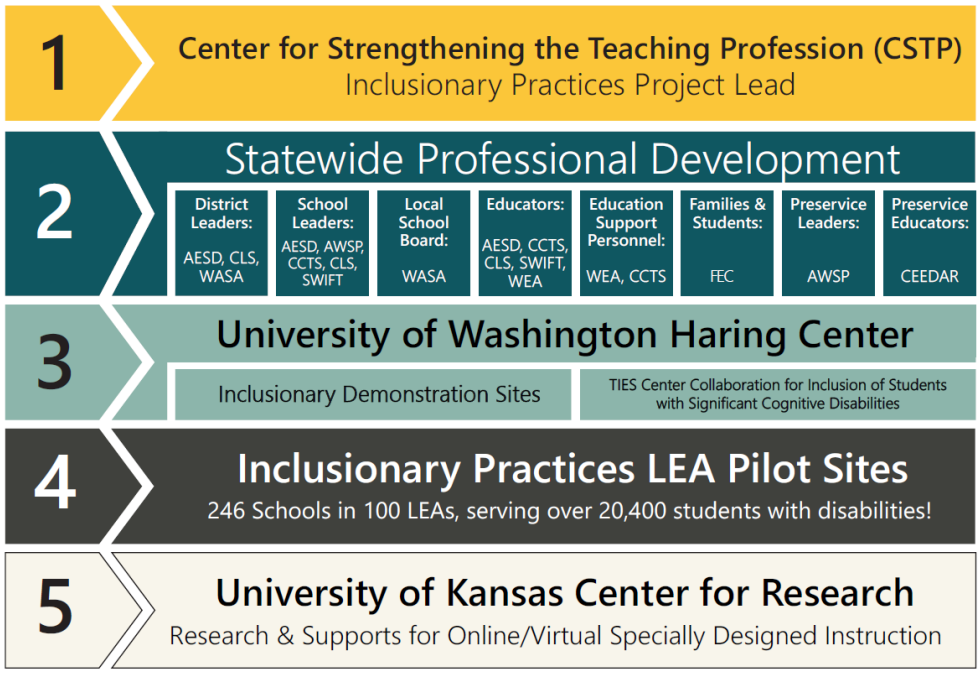
Note. This excerpt from the *District LRE Self-Assessment*, by Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2019, was adapted from a WestEd (2005) resource. (https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/specialed/programreview/monitoring/placement/IPP-LRE-Self-Assess-Tool.xlsx). In the public domain.

Professional Development

The Inclusionary Theory of Action (see Appendix A) and Logic Model and Driver Diagram (see Appendix B) highlighted that meaningful inclusion requires that all partners understand their roles in supporting inclusive learning environments. Partners include personnel from classroom staff to superintendents and school board members, along with students and families and preservice educators and administrators. To support the Inclusionary Practices Project aims, OSPI partnered with multiple professional development providers to reach a wide range of audiences (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Inclusionary Practices Project Partners



Note. From *Inclusionary Practices Project (IPP) LRE/Placement Data Update: January 2021*, by Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2021. (https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/specialed/inclusion/IPP-Data-Update-Year-2.pdf). In the public domain.

The statewide professional development providers identified in section two of Figure 1 directly aligned to the Inclusionary Theory of Action (see Appendix A) and Logic Model and Driver Diagram (see Appendix B). These providers included statewide professional organizations for school and district leadership, educator support organizations, higher education partners, valued community-based and parent support organizations, and nationally recognized technical assistance partners. Professional development partners were selected as part of a public procurement process by OSPI (2019-c). The request for proposals (RFP) identified the target audiences, the project goals aligned to the theory of action and logic model and driver diagram, and focus areas including equity, student outcomes, and family engagement. The Inclusionary Practices Project page included a section dedicated to professional development opportunities across the targeted audience groups, with summaries and direct links to each partner project page (OSPI, 2021). Project RFP summaries addressed the focus of this EA by including families as decision-makers, centering student voice through restorative practices, and discussing equity across diverse communities.

EA Checklist

A statewide project of this scope and size required oversight beyond the capacity of the OSPI Special Education division. Staff supported these leadership efforts, and OSPI also partnered with an external project lead, the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP; n.d.), to support project oversight and implementation. Three Inclusionary Practices

Project team leads completed the EA checklist (see Appendix D) to explore evidence of a theory of change, measurable goals and indicators, protocols for addressing unintended consequences or developments, and sufficient resource allocation. Respondents, which included an OSPI special education staff member involved in project implementation, the CSTP lead, and myself, completed the checklist independently and then met to discuss responses toward an aim of reaching consensus of 80% or more. The team agreed to consider the entire project design of the Inclusionary Practices Project, including all of the components included in the Documentation Overview section above, with a particular focus on the pilot districts engaging with the project. For example, several of the checklist questions reference partners, which the team answered with pilot districts in mind.

EA checklist answers aligned across all three respondents on 15 out of 17 total questions. For the two questions with misaligned responses, the team engaged in additional discussion about whether the project collected data on a control group (see Appendix D, question 10) and whether pilot districts submitted interim reports (see Appendix D, question 13). The discussion regarding a control group focused on the availability of annual public placement data at both the school and district levels, statewide, to compare pilot districts with non-participants. The team also acknowledged that, while some districts submitted interim reports past the due date, all reports had been received at the time of this EA checklist activity. After clarifying the questions, the team reached full consensus with a final scoring of 16 positive answers. Under Project Design, there was agreement that the project had a theory of change and related project targets carried across all project materials. Under Information Availability, the team agreed that all project materials are available publicly, including baseline data, targets, and project updates. Under Institutional Context, all three respondents agreed there were insufficient resources for the

project duration (see Appendix D, question 14). Although the proviso allocated sufficient funds, it did not allow time for a planning period before implementation. Additional planning time would have supported more coherence among project design, communication strategies, and project launch. The team also agreed that additional oversight staff would help support project contracts, invoicing, and implementation.

Partner Input

While this EA was conducted by project leadership to inform and improve project implementation, partner involvement is an essential component of any EA design (Trevisan & Walser, 2015). This section presents the results of feedback gathered from year-end reports from the 100 pilot districts receiving grant funding and professional development supports as part of the Inclusionary Practices Project. I also coded and summarized feedback from phone interviews with four parents of students with disabilities in two case study pilot districts. These direct sources were integral to evaluating the impact of the Inclusionary Practices Project. The Discussion section addresses next steps for incorporating this feedback into project design and implementation.

Pilot Year-End Reports

The 100 pilot districts that applied for and received grant funding over the two years of the Inclusionary Practices Project were required to submit year-end reports after year one (see Appendix E). This cohort reported an 11.3% increase in LRE1 data from baseline, compared with a 3.4% increase for state-level data for all students with disabilities and SOCWD. The protocol asked pilot districts to reflect on project accomplishments, project impact, barriers or challenges including and beyond COVID, lessons learned and plan changes, and resources needed to support continued implementation. Pilot district reflections revealed five key topics

aligned to the report protocol: barriers to implementation, pilot activities, focus areas of this EA, pilot impact and results, and needed supports. As part of my review, I uploaded the year-end reports into a qualitative data analytics software program, MAXQDA, and coded district responses for themes identified under each of the five key topic areas for a total of 749 coded statements. Table 4 summarizes the themes identified for each topic area and the frequency of themes within each area.

Table 4

Summary of Pilot District Feedback from Year-End Reports for 2019-20

End-of-Year Report Topics	Themes per Topic	Frequency, *n* (%)
Barriers to Implementation		
	Delayed Project Rollout	8, (6.9%)
	COVID	38, (32.8%)
	Mindsets about Inclusion	47, (40.5%)
	Lack of Systems	23, (19.8%)
Pilot Activities		
	Self-Assessment & Data	52, (14.2%)
	District & Building Leadership	54, (14.8%)
	Co-teaching & Co-Planning	27, (7.4%)
	Coaching & Mentoring	65, (17.8%)
	Social/Emotional Learning	19, (5.2%)
	Core Instruction	29, (7.9%)
	Technology	30, (8.2%)
	Teaming & Collaboration	90, (24.6%)
Focus of the EA		
	Equity	14, (29.2%)
	Family Engagement	19, (39.6%)
	Student Voice	15, (31.3%)

Pilot Impact & Results		
	Systems Change	100, (68.0%)
	Master Schedules	20, (13.6%)
	Student Planning	27, (18.4%)
Needed Supports		72, (9.6%)

Barriers to Implementation

While more than half of pilot district feedback was focused on pilot activities and impact and planning forward for implementation, about 15% of the coded responses addressed barriers to implementation due to various factors. Themes under barriers included the timing of the project rollout, challenges specific to COVID, mindsets regarding inclusion, and a lack of systems to support inclusive access for students with disabilities. For example, pilot districts shared that the project rolled out late in fall 2019, after staffing priorities for the year had been decided, and grant funds were not available until the beginning of 2020.

Delayed Project Rollout. State funding for the Inclusionary Practices Project was allocated as part of the 2019 legislative session, with a spending start date of July 1, 2019. As the first several months of the project timeline were focused on project design, pilot districts did not have opportunity to access project funds before January 2020. As a result, the planning and budget window for pilot districts was short, and districts had already mapped out their plans for the school year. Feedback about the project rollout also addressed confusion among the different project components, funding sources, and professional development providers.

COVID. It is no surprise that one-third of the responses regarding project implementation barriers were attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially considering the project timeline. Several reports noted that the work was just getting started when school facilities were closed statewide in March 2020. Barriers specific to COVID

included safety concerns and the inability to provide in-person instruction or professional development, along with the need to immediately pivot to virtual instruction and address related considerations for providing services to students with disabilities. The pandemic led to a variety of shortages, including time, staffing, and availability of content experts. Responses reflected uncertainty, about the pandemic, about the timeline for resuming in-person instruction, but the responses also identified opportunities. These innovative leaders and educators found ways to infuse inclusive practices into the pandemic response, including expanded options for free or low-cost professional development for both special and general educators, along with the power of instructional planning and delivery around essential standards.

Mindsets about Inclusion. Mindsets about inclusion represented over 40% of the coded responses relating to barriers. Reflections on beliefs noted staff resistance, apathy, unconscious bias, and whether it was the "right time" to implement inclusion. Discussions centered around who owns inclusion across roles and responsibilities. Respondents shared that project activities such as the self-assessment and theory of action work uncovered different perspectives, even among partners supporting the Inclusionary Practices Project, for meeting the needs of students with disabilities and by whom. Districts aimed to shift perspectives from *those kids* or *your kids* to *our kids* and better serve all students in the general education classroom, regardless of label. These mindsets also directly impacted pedagogy and service delivery, including beliefs about where and how to provide special education services and ways to foster student-centered learning.

Lack of Systems. Pilot districts identified multiple barriers related to a lack of systems or infrastructure for inclusive learning environments, representing 20% of the coded responses for barriers. Challenges included misalignment of district initiatives and staff perceptions that

inclusion is another thing to do rather than an approach that links across initiatives such as MTSS, positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and SEL. Respondents identified the need to start with why, to provide clear, districtwide messaging around a common language, vision, and a plan to build consensus and system culture built on a shared understanding of inclusion. Comments also addressed concerns about how past initiatives, spearheaded by individuals, lost momentum when those leads moved on.

Pilot district feedback also focused on the need to build inclusive learning systems with intention. Developing the project action plan and engaging in the self-assessment uncovered data practices that continued to segregate students with disabilities. Examples included communication gaps and data-sharing delays in progress monitoring processes. Another key barrier to inclusive practices was master scheduling, including considerations for which partners developed bell schedules (and when), staff scheduling for co-teaching and co-planning, and student access across core instruction, interventions and services, and electives. Partners also uncovered that root causes contributing to less-inclusive mindsets stemmed from educators who did not feel they had the training and skills to support students with disabilities in general education settings. COVID and challenges related to virtual instruction amplified these patterns.

Pilot Activities

Half of all coded responses across all areas addressed details about grant funding used to support pilot activities. Pilot activities included self-assessment and data, district and building leadership, coaching and mentoring, supports for co-teaching and co-planning, social/emotional learning, core instruction, technology, and teaming and collaboration.

Self-Assessment & Data. As part of the self-assessment process, respondents described multiple data review activities, including LRE data for the state, region, district, and across

schools, grade bands, classrooms, and at the student level. Teams also engaged in discussions of data on climate, PBIS implementation, and student progress. The District LRE Self-Assessment (OSPI, 2019-a) was a requirement for all pilot participants. Districts reported additional exploratory activities, including surveys on capacity and perception, fidelity measures, and focus groups with families and students. Teams utilized these data sources to identify strengths and areas for growth across the system, set project targets, and prioritize professional development activities. Several systems shared plans to revisit the District LRE Self-Assessment in future years to identify trends and measure change over time.

District & Building Leadership. Fifteen percent of the coded responses for pilot activities focused on the key role of administrators in fostering inclusive environments (Blanchett et al., 2005). Self-assessment and data review activities included principals and district leaders as key partners in discussions of root causes, professional development needs, and steps for building a shared culture of accountability. Leadership was included in professional development activities to build capacity, consensus, and alignment across building initiatives. Systems also focused on leveraging inclusive building leadership across district systems through frequent teaming, integrating inclusionary practices with MTSS implementation, and aligning school improvement plans and building bell schedules.

Co-Teaching & Co-Planning. Several of the pilot activities focused specifically on building system supports for co-teaching and co-planning. Training activities were intentional in including co-teaching teams and partners across administration, general education, and special education. Content to support co-teaching teams included clarifying roles and responsibilities of all staff in building inclusive learning environments. Implementation supports included staggered rollout, particularly for secondary teams, along with targeted grade bands for vertical alignment.

Coaching & Mentoring. Pilot districts consistently rated coaching and mentoring support activities as impactful. Several of the coded responses focused on coaching support provided through the Inclusionary Practices Project statewide professional development providers (see Figure 1). Examples described district leadership teams, trainings and support provided by regional educational service districts (ESD), and project-sponsored access to nationally recognized experts in the field of inclusive practices. Districts also shared activities to build coaching and mentoring supports within local systems, including leadership training and virtual conferences focused on inclusion. Grant funds supported staff release time to provide coaching and mentoring supports to educators and teams. Activities included staff-led book studies, peer observations and feedback sessions, consultation support for individual students, and systems for tracking student progress on goals and adjusting instruction.

Social/Emotional Learning. The connections among inclusion, social/emotional learning, and MTSS structures grew even more significant in the time of COVID. Project action plans described inclusionary practices in staff training on PBIS, classroom management, and social/emotional learning. Grant funds purchase SEL software licenses and staff release time for technology training and ongoing discussions about data and progress. Funds also supported additional staff time for PBIS coaches and consultants to meet the needs of students with more significant behavioral needs, including targeted supports with de-escalation, trauma-informed practices, and engagement through virtual instruction.

Core Instruction. Resources to support greater access to core instruction in general education settings for students with disabilities focused on supports for staff and instructional practices. Teams purchased resources for lending libraries and provided cross-sector trainings on UDL, High-Leverage Practices in Special Education (Council for Exceptional Children, 2017),

virtual instruction, and MTSS. Professional learning communities (PLC) were structured to include various roles, areas of focus, and grade levels, and these teams helped expand course offerings, restructure collaboration protocols, and develop resources for increasing access to and rigor within core content.

Technology. Accessibility needs and assistive technology (AT) are additional examples of how COVID raised general awareness of the power of technology supports, particularly for virtual learning. When school facilities were closed statewide in March 2020, district systems experienced immediate spikes in demand for devices to support learning and instruction in remote settings. As discussed in the barriers section, COVID required districts to rethink their action plans for professional development, prompting project leadership to offer greater flexibility in grant spending for accessibility and AT supports. District consistently expressed appreciation for spending flexibility, which provided devices for learning, communication, and visual supports. Funds also purchased accessibility software and features and training on technology use for staff, students, and families.

Teaming & Collaboration. More than a quarter of all responses coded to pilot activities addressed teaming, collaboration, and the time and resources required. Reports acknowledged the importance of including multiple roles and perspectives on inclusionary planning teams from the start. Partners also shared the value of role-specific supports and time for job alikes to learn with and from each other. Grant funding supported release time for building and sustaining these relationships, both within and across content areas.

Focus of the EA

This EA measured the project design's efficacy for disrupting racial segregation in special education placement through project activities that centered equity, family engagement,

and student voice. Coded responses from the year-end reports were equally divided among the three areas of focus. Pilot district reflections addressed the need for courageous conversations to explore inequities and the intersectionality of race and disability. Activities highlighted supports for students with disabilities learning English, restorative justice, culturally responsive practices, and disproportionality in special education identification, placement, and discipline. The impact of COVID required school staff to be innovative in connecting with students and families. Plans included examples of family engagement and student voice across activities, surveys, focus groups, and other direct feedback to inform decisions and priorities. Reports highlighted how districts pivoted to find new ways to engage, with a commitment to continuing these expanded opportunities even once in-person opportunities resume.

Pilot Impact & Results

Nearly 20% of all coded responses addressed project impact, with systems change representing the majority for that category, followed by student planning and master scheduling.

Systems Change. Districts reported that project activities generated opportunities to thread inclusive practices into district vision and values, develop a common vocabulary, and share accountability for increasing access to general education settings. System activities included school board goal setting and revisions to policies, procedures, and guidance documents to support inclusionary practices. Reports also reflected on the project impact on culture and belief systems, including evidence at all system levels and across roles and responsibilities. Respondents specifically called out the value of including the voices of both believers and skeptics to develop plans that invite partners to start from where they are.

Lessons learned about implementation focused on building inclusionary habits and being purposeful in addressing inclusion and aligning efforts across content areas, initiatives, and

teams. Supports for implementation referenced data literacy needs, protocols and frameworks to support alignment, and considerations for feeder patterns across systems. With respect to pacing and scaling implementation, a common theme was to take it slowly, to start with small steps, and allow time to form inclusionary habits. As pilot districts looked ahead to year two of the project and beyond, several that had started with a cohort of pilot schools felt ready to expand resources and supports to additional buildings and, in some cases, districtwide. Several examples focused on the gains documented for students, both for inclusive access and with progress, leading to additional interest and readiness in the system to expand to additional teams.

Master Scheduling. There is no question that master scheduling falls under the umbrella of systems change. I coded it as a separate item under impact because of the critical part it plays as a condition for inclusive access and because so many of the reports highlighted it as one of the most impactful changes. Feedback centered on leadership efforts to redesign schedules with an intentional focus on co-teaching teams with common co-planning periods. These changes increased access to core instruction, interventions and enrichment, and electives for all students, including students with disabilities. Conversations also went beyond bell schedules to dig into instructional and service-delivery models, including alternatives to pull-out services, vertical alignment plans across feeder schools, and expanded course offerings.

Student Planning. Planning for individual students was another key area identified under project impact. While the project funding and activities focused on educator capacity, student access was the core of the entire design. Respondents shared impact on IEP development, including standards-aligned goals and considerations of increased access to core instruction and general education settings. These changes were supported through learning management systems that aligned IEP goals with timely and up-to-date progress monitoring data available to all staff

members. Individualized student supports included protocols for addressing student needs in the general education setting, student-led opportunities for self-reflection and advocacy, and shared accountability between general and special education for student supports. Districts reported that these changes have also resulted in more inclusive access for students with more significant cognitive disabilities, who historically spent the majority of their school day in self-contained settings. One district reported that, through these systems changes, students who had previously been in an off-campus, self-contained behavioral program were reintegrated back into their neighborhood schools with intensive, individualized supports and increasing access to general education settings.

Needed Supports

Pilot District partners also shared ideas for additional project resources and supports to sustain ongoing efforts. Themes under needed supports included ideas for improving project design and funding, aligning the project with other statewide initiatives, and expanding statewide professional development and demonstration sites.

Project Design & Funding. Respondents expressed appreciation for the project website, the planning and self-assessment activities, and the meetings, communications, and webinars targeted for pilot districts. There were requests to continue and expand those opportunities and to streamline communication about available trainings into one place. Feedback also addressed the need for ongoing flexibility as the pandemic continued. Several reports also requested additional resources for analyzing LRE data, including background about how the rates are calculated and any impact resulting from school facility closures and virtual instruction. One respondent reflected that state guidance about the project was unclear, and another requested more feedback on their district action plan.

Reports included requests for continued and additional funds to support curriculum and instructional materials, technology, needs, staff release time, and more. Participants would also appreciate continued flexibility for allowable use of funds and additional flexibility for the grant through extended timelines or the ability to carry over funds into the next school year.

Alignment of State Initiatives. As addressed under barriers to implementation, several reports provided feedback requesting clarity around the different project components, along with the potential for aligning the Inclusionary Practices Project to other statewide initiatives, such as MTSS and SEL. One specific suggestion requested that OSPI and other project partners explicitly reference specific project components in communications to districts.

Statewide Professional Development. Pilot districts highly valued supports offered through the project's professional development partners. Feedback focused on continued and additional supports, including networking opportunities, posted recordings of webinars and more options for staff clock hours, more direct coaching support, and access to additional content experts. Several requests centered on expanding supports for virtual and hybrid learning models and providing accommodations through virtual instruction. There was also interest in more specialized inclusion supports for content areas beyond English-language arts and mathematics, along with targeted supports for early learning, elementary, and secondary levels.

Demonstration Sites. Pilot districts shared numerous accolades for the virtual demonstration sites, which showcased successful inclusive practices in school and district teams. Districts also noted intense disappointment that, due to the pandemic, in-person visits to these sites were not possible. Teams expressed great interest in on-site visits once safety conditions allow for it. Some of the feedback included requests to streamline and expand access and promotion of the virtual site visits, including webinar recordings, to support staff access. Another

respondent requested job-alike teaming in collaboration with the demonstration site; for example, opportunities for principals to connect with the administrators of those demonstration sites for deeper learning and discussion.

Case Study Districts: Parent Interviews

Parents are a child's first and lifelong teachers, and they are integral members of the IEP team. Trevisan and Walser (2015) identified the importance of including multiple viewpoints and considering power relationships when interpreting that feedback when conducting EAs. I conducted four parent interviews with families of students with disabilities to reflect their direct experiences in two case study pilot districts. The interviews included three parents from District A, a small, rural school district in northwestern Washington with an increase in LRE1 of 39.4% from baseline, and one parent from District B, a large school district in southeastern Washington with an increase in LRE1 of 25.2% from baseline. The student profiles included two white students with disabilities and two SOCWD, including one multilingual student. The grade levels of the students included preschool, elementary, middle, and high school.

Utilizing an interview protocol (see Appendix F), I spoke with a parent from each family for about 20 minutes. After introducing myself and explaining the purpose and format of the interview, I asked questions about the student's grade level, the amount of time spent in general education, and the parent's thoughts about student placement and progress. I then asked what the school or district had done to involve them in placement decisions, make them feel included in the school and the community, and learn more about advocating for their child. The final question was open ended for anything more the parent wanted to share with me. I coded parent responses into topic areas centered on student supports, partner roles and responsibilities, including parent advocacy and other IEP team members such as the principal, case manager, and

general education teachers. I also coded responses that addressed the focus areas of this EA: equity, student-centered considerations, and family supports.

Student Supports

Each family acknowledged the difficulties of this past school year due to COVID and the school facility closures. All four reported that some in-person instruction had resumed, though just recently and mostly as a hybrid model with both in-person and virtual instruction. Families described varying levels of access to general education and student supports provided in those general education settings. Examples included a regular early childhood program with services provided separately by the school district and private providers, inclusion in general education content classes with services and paraeducator supports, accommodations for notetaking, and a guided study class to pre-teach and re-teach skills and support with classwork. Families also shared examples of students served in special education settings, related services such as speech, modified supports for English-language arts and mathematics, and a self-contained elementary classroom. Several of the conversations noted that inclusion has changed over the years for their students, increasing or decreasing depending on student progress and needs. One family expressed dissatisfaction with the school-based services and felt that private therapy was much more helpful.

Partner Roles & Responsibilities

Parent Advocacy. In sharing their stories, families provided multiple examples of advocating for their children's education and their experiences with the IEP process. Two of the families reported feeling heard by the school partners and included in educational decisions, including placement. Two families said they felt less connected to the school, with long periods without any communication from the school or IEP case manager. One family shared that they

decided to relocate to a smaller, rural school district from a larger nearby school district to support their child's education. They felt the move provided more community connections, more opportunities for community members and school staff to know their child. Another family shared that parent involvement is an ongoing effort, especially at the secondary level with so many different teachers. Parents described requesting notes and accommodations be added to student IEPs and sending emails to general education teachers about student needs, accommodations, and successful strategies. Another family described challenges with the school's early childhood screening and evaluation process and that private evaluation and services have been life-changing for the student.

IEP Team. Nearly half of the coded responses from family interviews addressed the IEP and IEP team members. Families reported that the IEP case managers seemed to have the most information about the IEP and their child's disability. Several families reported that the IEP team has seemed willing to try different strategies to support the student and that the team also discussed supports for inclusion. One respondent shared that there might be too much focus on inclusion even though the school team did not seem prepared. Another parent felt that the school only reached out when the IEP meeting was due or when paperwork was needed. The high school student's family reflected that the IEP team was much larger when the student was still in elementary school, including the principal, school psychologist, the teachers, and even the student's paraeducator. All of the families mentioned the key role of principals, and several statements stressed the importance of the principal in addressing specific parent concerns and setting the tone for inclusion across the entire school.

General Education Teachers. Each of the families also discussed the critical role of general education teachers in the success or failure of inclusion. Some examples highlighted

teachers who were open to learning more about student needs and communicating with families. Families also shared challenges working with general educators who did not know the student's IEP and accommodations or were unwilling to provide the accommodations. One family reflected that some teachers appeared scared of what they did not understand, and all of the families expressed the opinion that general education teachers would benefit from additional training on disability and inclusion.

Focus of the EA

Like the coding process used for the pilot district year-end reports, I coded parent interview responses related to the focus areas of this EA: racial equity, student-centered considerations, and family supports. One parent shared a concern, spanning multiple years, that her bi-racial child was targeted and singled out for being different by teachers because of racism. Another family shared their experiences as a multilingual family and their interest in fostering skills in both languages. Each of the four families also shared that their inclusion decisions have centered on their children's strengths and needs. Families shared awareness of how their children learned best, including, in most cases, a combination of supports for inclusion and in special education settings, such as during testing. Other examples included supports for behavioral needs, mental health considerations, and situations where the students themselves requested more inclusion in later grades. Families also reflected on how inclusion goes beyond the classroom and includes culture, common spaces like play structures, opportunities for friendships and relationships, and community connections.

Families were asked to describe activities offered by the school to help them advocate for support. They shared very few examples, and two of the parents shared that the schools offered no such supports. Most shared that they had found other sources of support, such as teaching

themselves, talking to other parents, joining regional parent-to-parent networks, and working with disability advocates. One family shared that, in recent years, the school district had started to partner with a regional parent network to host family nights with guest speakers and activities, with a deeper focus on students with more significant cognitive disabilities. In addition to more training for teachers, families felt it would help if school staff communicates more frequently with families to share information, provide updates, and celebrate student wins.

Summary

This chapter compiled the project documentation review results, the EA checklist I completed with two project leads, and the coded responses from 100 pilot district reports and four parent interviews. Inductive analysis of these results revealed three central themes for analyzing the impact of the Inclusionary Practices Project, including centering equity, supporting inclusionary practices, and shaping project impact. Equity was a stated priority in the project theory of action and across all project documentation and materials. Equity was referenced across year-end reports and in parent interviews. Supports for inclusionary practices addressed the technical aspects of project design and implementation, including data, funding, and professional development. Shaping project impact included evidence and measures of the extent to which project design and activities led to equitable outcomes for inclusive access.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter identifies lessons learned from the EA and recommendations for utilizing the project documentation review results, the EA checklist, and the coded responses from pilot districts and parent interviews. Limitations of the study follow with a suggestion for future research. The chapter concludes with final reflections and suggestions for applying the learning from this EA to the design of future state initiatives.

Lessons Learned from the EA

Trevisan and Walser (2015) outlined several conditions to support the credibility and utility of EA findings. These include maintaining alignment among the research questions, results, and suggestions, co-designing conclusions and recommendations with partners, and focusing the recommendations within the project's scope and authority. Though the original purpose for EA design was to determine readiness for external program evaluation, usage over time has evolved to focus more on program monitoring and technical assistance, social change through partner involvement, organizational learning, and research-to-practice design (Trevisan & Walser, 2015). I identified project areas of strength, opportunities for improvement, and related recommendations for each of the three central themes summarized in the Results section: centering equity, supporting inclusionary practices, and shaping project impact.

Centering Equity

In Chapter 1, I applied a symbolic organizational framework (Bolman & Deal, 2008) as part of the literature review of inclusion and explored the roles partners across special education play in determining services, access, and outcomes for students of color with disabilities (SOCWD). This concept applies to centering equity in inclusionary practices, as well; we share a collective responsibility.

Areas of Strength

Several aspects of the project design focused on equity and stated commitment to keeping students and families at the center. Pilot district reports included multiple references to starting with why through a common framing and understanding. The project design and materials supported that priority by defining terms, sharing research and data around inclusion, racial equity, and disproportionality, and highlighting culturally responsive practices. Project leadership also considered the variety of roles and professional development needs of targeted audiences, including administrators and school board members, teachers and paraeducators, pre-service educators and administrators, and families. Project activities focused on partnerships and relationships across systems, moving beyond training for inclusionary practices. Several pilot districts shared examples of surveys and focus groups with students and families and implementation teams with different staff roles and specialization areas.

Opportunities for Improvement

If the project design started with *why*, the EA results suggested a need to *clarify the why*. Equity and inclusion have different meanings and implications across audiences. The project documentation review revealed opportunities for intentional focus on racial equity and disproportionate access to general education settings across race and ethnicity. While reviewing targeted audiences included in the project design, I realized that, although project impact and student outcomes were core priorities, specific activities to center student voice were missing. This EA revealed opportunities to learn from examples shared by pilot districts. Several year-end reports addressed racial equity, family engagement, and student voice, even though the year-end report protocol (see Appendix E) did not specifically reference equity. These anecdotal data,

while helpful, do not provide a method for measuring change over time. The family interviews reflected mixed experiences with school engagement and racial equity and indicated that schools should contact families more often. All of the families expressed that educators would benefit from additional training on inclusive practices.

Recommendations for Centering Equity

Homeostasis, a concept from the field of biology, implies that systems seek stability and sameness. Systems change is difficult, particularly when it targets concepts at the foundational core, such as inequities in education. It is not enough to start with why and clarify our focus; this work must internalize that why so it becomes woven into the fabric of the system itself. The Inclusionary Practices Project design needs to start with racial equity in access, rather than applying equity as a lens. Project leadership should engage in equity audit activities across all project documents and materials to determine baseline measures and targets for addressing racial equity in inclusionary practices. The District LRE Self-Assessment (OSPI, 2019-a) and the Inclusionary Logic Model and Driver Diagram (OSPI, n.d.-b) included little or no references to racial equity.

Another recommendation was to have a more intentional inclusion of student voice across project design, resources, and activities. Building on the examples shared by pilot districts, project partners should consider including student self-advocates as part of interviews, focus groups, webinars and trainings, and through the demonstration site partnership. Students, families, and communities possess knowledge and skills for building consensus and inclusive environments; project activities should center those voices to co-design professional development activities, school and district teaming, and instructional practices. The Inclusionary Practices Project started as a legislative proviso based on the advocacy of several key legislators.

State legislators are also key partners in this project, and project leadership should continue conversations with these partners about the importance of racial equity and inclusion for SOCWD.

Supporting Inclusionary Practices

Project supports for inclusionary practices focused on project design and implementation, including data, funding, and professional development.

Areas of Strength

Alignment across project components was a clear strength in the program design. The legislative proviso, the public data, the pilot recruitment process, and the project theory and activities demonstrated consistent focus on increased access to general education settings for students with disabilities, including SOCWD. The EA checklist results, the professional development supports with statewide partners, and the feedback from pilot district participants in the year-end reports provided evidence of this alignment.

Data supports included annual placement data, posted publicly for state and district levels, along with unsuppressed building-level data available to school and district partners. These data included PreK data and disaggregation across LRE, race and ethnicity, grade level, and language access levels. The project also included funding supports for implementation across K-12 settings, including specific activities targeting graduation and transition into the workforce. The grant design provided a common structure and expectations across all pilot district partners, allowing flexibility for accommodating local contexts, meeting systems where they were, and addressing the unexpected, such as a global pandemic!

The core project mission, professional development, utilized an all-hands-on-deck approach to leverage the connections and expertise of trusted professional organizations,

technical assistance providers, and content experts. In addition to trainings, learning communities, and cohort teams, project supports included written models for implementation, demonstration models in practice, and differentiated supports across the targeted audiences. Project funding structures allowed these resources to be available free to participants statewide, beyond pilot districts.

Opportunities for Improvement

The results of the EA also revealed several areas for improving project supports for inclusionary practices in school districts. The timing of the project launch, funding, and rollout created implementation challenges for pilot district partners. School systems plan and budget for initiatives and staffing far in advance; late fall to early spring is too late to allow planning in alignment with other district priorities. Feedback from pilot districts also included requests for aligning project priorities and activities with other state-level initiatives, such as MTSS and SEL. Efforts to align initiatives across the state agency will also build support for inclusion, as the message of inclusion is communicated by partners outside of special education.

Additionally, while the volume of available data was vast, some partners expressed confusion about interpreting those data and requested clarity around calculations, sources, and access. Related feedback critiqued the grant funding design, such as the example of confusion around the different components of the project, and several districts reported difficulties spending down funds allocated through the project due to COVID and school facility closures, along with other systems barriers. Feedback on the professional development opportunities offered through the project was overwhelmingly positive. However, several districts shared disappointment that in-person visits to demonstration sites were canceled due to COVID and

hoped on-site opportunities would still be available once safe to do so. Pilot districts also suggested a centralized location to sign up for and access trainings and posted recordings.

Recommendations for Supporting Inclusionary Practices

Recommendations for improving project supports include clarifying project design components by including explicit references and details when communicating about the various project activities and professional development providers. Recommendations for the project webpage involve simplifying the organizational structure to clarify key components: research and data, professional development, and project updates. The webpage should also include a shared calendar for upcoming professional development opportunities across all project partners and an index of posted research, resources, and postings of previously-recorded trainings. To strengthen alignment with initiatives beyond special education, project leadership should continue and expand current efforts to support the statewide MTSS initiatives. An example includes regional MTSS consultants supporting district implementation of MTSS, with a focus on the inclusion of students with disabilities across all tiers of intervention.

Recommendations for data supports include continuing year-over-year comparisons of school-level data for inclusion and student outcomes, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, along with a recommendation to make these data available through a secure, web-based platform consolidated with school improvement data systems. This work has already started, with annual access to an LRE Data Platform for district and school partners. The platform, which will soon be available in an online platform, provides year-over-year comparisons of special education demographics and placement data at the building level. Access to data is secondary to utility of data; project partners should continue to incorporate data literacy protocols and capacity building into all data review activities with school and district teams. Finally, feedback from partners

expressed universal interest in continuing access to professional development supports through the project. Recommendations include cross-initiative and cross-partner professional development opportunities and continued development of free resources and materials to support inclusionary practices. These include offerings such as online modules for inclusive MTSS, instructional handbooks on inclusionary practices, and inclusion implementation guides for educators, families, and school administrators.

Shaping Project Impact

The frameworks of CRT and DisCrit posit that symbolic words and initiatives are meaningless without demonstrating impact. Shaping project impact goes beyond considering and measuring inequities in special education placement; this section focuses on how to rethink project design accountability to realize inclusive outcomes for SOCWD.

Areas of Strength

Project activities were guided by the theory of action and logic model and driver diagram, with targeted funding and professional development supports. The project's accountability structures focused on a common purpose measured through systemwide targets and indicators for access to general education and student outcomes beyond placement. This qualitative study explored the systems changes and innovations behind the quantitative impact on LRE data in pilot districts. LRE1 data for the 100 pilot districts increased 11.3% from baseline over the two-year project timeline, compared with a state-level increase of 3.4% for all students with disabilities and SOCWD. Pilot districts also shared anecdotal reports of student impact and outcomes beyond LRE.

Opportunities for Improvement

Accountability structures are a primary vehicle for realizing the project commitment of centering equity. Pilot district action plans required planning information on equity and family engagement, but the year-end reports did not specifically request updates on how systems were centering equity. It is to the credit of those pilot districts that voluntarily included that critical information in their summaries. The family interview results showed differences in levels of family engagement in the two pilot districts. One family observed increased opportunities for voice, learning, and advocacy in recent years; all of the families shared that they have had to work hard to keep themselves informed and involved in their children's planning.

Regarding impact on data, the Inclusionary Practices Project identified and measured LRE targets at the state and pilot-district levels for students with disabilities but did not directly address LRE targets for SOCWD (See Table 2). State LRE data show a 3.4% increase in LRE 1 from baseline for all students with disabilities and SOCWD. These data show that the opportunity gap for inclusive access remains steady for SOCWD compared with all students with disabilities. Additional focus and technical assistance are also needed to impact PreK LRE data, which show that only 20% of children with disabilities access regular early childhood programs; over 50% access preschool services in special education settings such as developmental preschool classrooms (OSPI, 2021-b).

Recommendations for Shaping Project Impact

Shaping project impact for racial equity in inclusionary practices will require deliberate action within and across program design and activities. Examples include explicit prompts related to family empowerment, racial equity and disproportionality, and student voice in grant applications, action plans, and required interim reports for pilot districts and professional

development partners. Plans and interim reports should address baseline measures and targets. Equity-informed LRE data targets for SOCWD, and specifically for Black students with disabilities, can add weight to the project's stated commitment to centering equity. This EA was completed during the second year of implementation for the two-year project. While it is early yet to measure the project impact on student outcome data, it is critical to monitor progress over time. Project leadership has also recommended that the state legislature consider expanding the project scope to span PreK through grade 12, should project funding be extended.

Limitations of the EA

Potential limitations of this EA included the impact of the COVID pandemic, the contributors of the pilot-district year-end reports, the small number of family interviews, and my role as both project lead and principal investigator. All respondents, including pilot districts and parents interviewed, identified numerous challenges and barriers due to COVID. The pandemic impacted planned activities, staff availability and focus, services to students, and the ability to spend grant funds within the project timeline. Despite this, pilot districts engaged in valiant efforts to advance the project, and the results in LRE data reflect those efforts. Special education directors were the primary drafters of the year-end reports, lending a particular lens to the feedback provided. The mid-project placement data for the Inclusionary Practices Project are promising, as are some of the trends I uncovered between the most- and least-inclusive districts in Washington state. This qualitative study sought to understand the systems planning and actions behind some of those data patterns. Future research could include a quantitative review of project impact on placement data and student outcomes, including SOCWD, after project activities are complete.

Another potential limitation was the small number of family interviews conducted. Despite outreach to 150 families through email and mailed letters and follow-up communications sent out by the leadership and staff in the two case study districts, four families volunteered for interviews. In my experience as state director, that is not a typical response; families have generally been more willing to provide feedback on their experiences in special education. COVID may have been a potential factor in the limited number of responses.

Finally, I was ever aware of my role both as project lead and principal investigator. An EA is conducted internally by project leadership, which means that intentional steps are warranted to minimize bias (Trevisan & Walser, 2015). My steps to guard against potential bias included providing ongoing updates to project leads and division leadership, completing the EA checklist with other project team leads, incorporating all pilot district year-end reports, and conducting family interviews. I also shared the draft section of the family interview results with the parents I interviewed and invited them to provide input before submission.

Conclusion

This EA sought to determine the project's likelihood of disrupting racial segregation in special education. The literature review provided context and rationale for the problem of practice focused on disrupting racial segregation in special education. CRT and DisCrit provided a framework for evaluating the efficacy of Washington's statewide Inclusionary Practice Project through an EA design with a critical lens. The results section summarized a review of project documentation and materials and pilot district and family reflections about project impact on placement decisions for SOCWD. Results also netted valuable feedback to inform program design and improvement. The Discussion section identified project strengths, areas for

improvement, and related recommendations across the three central themes identified through the EA: centering equity, supporting inclusionary practices, and shaping project impact.

This EA was also a valuable organizational tool for project leadership to evaluate project design for disrupting racial segregation in special education. While preliminary LRE data for the pilot districts and state are promising, more focused efforts are needed in project design and activities to close the gap in access to general education for SOCWD and specifically for Black students with disabilities. The recommendations included in the Lessons Learned section build on the body of research and address both the results of the EA and the ongoing needs of educators, students, and families for developing and sustaining equitable inclusionary practices. Special education research, data, and policy trends demonstrate that equity must be intentionally centered; it will not occur accidentally in systems that were not initially designed to meet the needs of all students.

As of the date of this report, the Washington state legislature was considering a proposal to extend funding for the Inclusionary Practices Project for an additional two years. Regardless of the outcome of that consideration, the lessons learned through this EA have applications across division priorities and initiatives as part of the general supervisory system for special education oversight. My hope is this EA also provides a roadmap for other state agencies and school and district partners to implement and scale inclusionary practices by identifying system needs and strengths, utilizing data to inform planning and priorities, prioritizing project funds and activities, and centering racial equity, family engagement, and student voice with a critical eye toward impact.

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APPENDIX A: INCLUSIONARY THEORY OF ACTION

Inclusionary Practices
Professional Development Project

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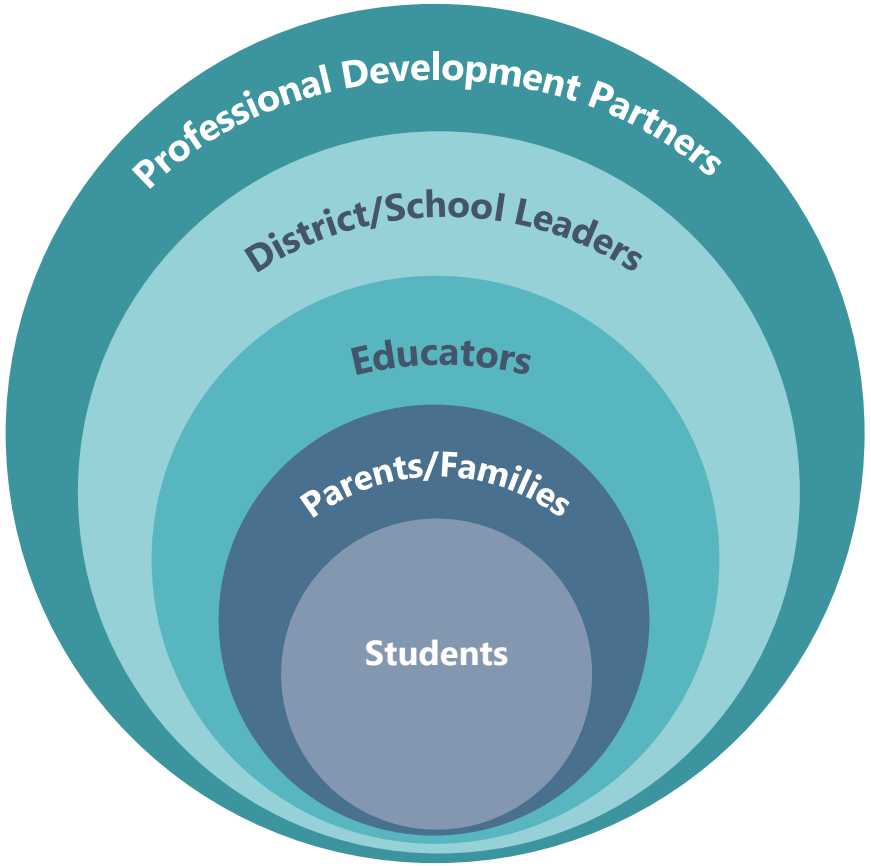
Inclusionary Theory of Action

Data analysis and problems of practice laid the foundation for development of a theory of action toward meaningful inclusion for all students. This theory of action identifies the system inputs needed to support inclusive activities, focused on positive outputs and outcomes—across settings, content areas, and stakeholder partnerships—for sustainable systems change.

A culturally-responsive approach centers the experiences of students with disabilities and their families, particularly students of color and groups who have traditionally been denied a voice in decision making.

The Inclusionary Practices Theory of Action maps out the wide variety of resources and activities that support stakeholder partners with implementing inclusive learning environments.



Inclusionary Theory of Action

If <u>students</u> are provided…	so they can…	in order to experience…	then they will…
➢ Access to high-quality core instruction in general education settings ➢ Opportunities to learn with and from non-disabled peers ➢ Instruction from teachers who hold high expectations and the belief that all students can learn and succeed	➢ Develop closer relationships with staff and students across the entire school community ➢ Engage with both grade-level content and individualized instruction for accelerated growth	➢ Ongoing development with academic, social, and self-advocacy skills	➢ Have increased confidence in their identities as lifelong learners ➢ Be better prepared for post-secondary education, employment, and civic engagement
If <u>families</u> are provided…	**so they can…**	**in order to experience…**	**then they will…**
➢ Culturally-responsive opportunities to attend and participate ➢ Engagement and collaboration opportunities for families of students with and without disabilities ➢ Flexibility in scheduling meetings (IEP's, conferences, follow-ups, etc.) ➢ Family-friendly handbooks and flow charts on placement ➢ Easy-to-navigate transitions (P-12) that increase inclusive opportunities ➢ Access to mandatory reporting of screening results (i.e., dyslexia) ➢ Frequent opportunities to share concerns, with evidence of staff response ➢ Transparent documentation of input received from parents and families	➢ Plan and train for meaningful IEPs focused on growth ➢ Engage in discussion and instructional planning for high leverage practices ➢ Focus on self-determination and student independence ➢ Make sure practices and procedures effectively pursue an inclusive mission ➢ Parents know how to find information that supports them and their child	➢ Increased participation & engagement in the IEP process ➢ Evidence that student needs are being met through strengths-based IEPs ➢ Being treated with respect and having strategies in place to address disagreements ➢ Greater student expectations/ independence at home and in the community ➢ Viewing themselves as valued educational partners	➢ Feel their input is solicited early and often, is valued, and is used to change systems ➢ Believe the school community cares about their children and sees them as capable learners ➢ Experience transparent and easy-to-navigate placement processes ➢ Feel valued as experts on their children's learning and that their needs, as parents, are also considered and addressed

Inclusionary Theory of Action

If <u>educators</u> are provided…	so they can…	in order to experience…	then they will…
➢ Professional development in: ▪ Learning standards & developmental trajectories ▪ Evidence-based instruction ▪ MTSS (progress monitoring, tiered instruction, engagement) ▪ Universal Design for Learning (UDL) ▪ High-leverage Practices (HLP) ▪ IEP development (standards-aligned goals, team roles, agency linkages) ▪ Strength-based, growth mindset ▪ Social-emotional learning ▪ Culturally responsive teaching ▪ Data-informed decision making ▪ Family engagement strategies ➢ Coaching & co-teaching supports ➢ Career progression pathways ➢ Release time; coverage for learning ➢ Frequent opportunities for collaboration ➢ System leadership supportive of inclusion and responsive to needs ➢ Assistive technology supports ➢ Transparent curriculum adoption, including intervention materials	➢ Align curriculum & differentiate/ scaffold instruction ➢ Maintain high expectations for student growth and development ➢ Engage in peer mentoring ➢ Foster student self-determination/ advocacy and independence ➢ Feel successful with classroom management ➢ Collaborate in support of increasing access to general education settings ➢ Engage in collaborative/team lesson planning and engagement ➢ Track student progress to inform planning meetings and tiered supports ➢ Benefit from peer learning and engagement with SLPs, OTs, PTs, and assistive technology experts	➢ Learning-driven instruction (over activity-driven instruction) ➢ Higher teacher satisfaction and sense of self-efficacy ➢ Robust discussions about standards and development ➢ Clear building commitment to broad representation/ participation in IEP meetings ➢ Consistent processes for onboarding IEP team members ➢ Ongoing professional learning in support of inclusive practices ➢ Common language around inclusive access ➢ Equity in placement access and increased confidence about placement decisions	➢ Know and teach the content standards ➢ Meet or exceed professional standards ➢ Believe all students can achieve & learn ➢ Schedule/use/manage time effectively for instruction ➢ Differentiate instruction ➢ Apply expertise in tiered supports and data collection strategies ➢ Apply knowledge of characteristics of disabilities ➢ Implement assistive technology and UDL concepts ➢ Demonstrate strong collaboration skills

Inclusionary Theory of Action

If school/district leaders are provided…	so they can…	in order to experience…	then they will…
➢ Leadership development in: ▪ Inclusive professional development ▪ Strategic Planning (timelines, baselines, targets, collective accountability) ▪ Addressing unconscious bias (racism, ableism) ▪ Family/community engagement (all, diverse, language access, etc.) ▪ Collaborative peer learning ➢ Strategies and resources for braided funding to support inclusive access ➢ Partnerships with professional/advocacy groups and building-level access to content experts, interventionists, paraeducators, counselors, social workers, nurses, etc. ➢ Supports for collective bargaining in support of inclusive practices ➢ Teacher evaluation resources (TPEP, HLP crosswalks, supports for non-traditional routes to certification, walkthroughs, etc.) in support of inclusive practices	➢ Design proactive, inclusive supports and reinforce collective, inclusive placement decisions ➢ Provide high-quality, differentiated PD responsive to staff needs ➢ Maximize effective use/braiding of funds ➢ Provide staff coaching supports and collaborative planning time ➢ Inform parent/families of the benefits of inclusive practices (outreach, focus groups) ➢ Protect time and space for professional growth for supporting all students ➢ Ensure mission statements reflect inclusive values and prioritization of meeting individual student needs ➢ Foster student-growth goals and focused criterion	➢ Shared decision making with staff and stakeholders in support of inclusive practices ➢ Positive schoolwide impact of increased placement in general education settings ➢ Availability and allocation of staff appropriate to needs of students and building ➢ Alignment w/district vision & common understanding across programs at district level ➢ Less staff turnover (particularly in special education) ➢ Fewer formal complaints from parents and families regarding placement decisions	➢ Believe in all students ➢ Support effective instruction by teachers with content knowledge ➢ Leverage staffing/scheduling to strengthen instruction & meet staff and student needs ➢ Create and support an inclusive, engaging vision ➢ Recognize educators as professionals

APPENDIX B: INCLUSIONARY LOGIC MODEL AND DRIVER DIAGRAM

Inclusionary Practices
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Inclusionary Logic Model and Driver Diagram

If we provide statewide support to target audiences that is consistent in the project priority areas of:

- Coaching/mentoring
- State and local capacity to demonstrate positive peer relationships
- State and local capacity to utilize the expertise of Washington public education faculty, staff, and leaders
- Strengthen and align existing professional development and support activities
- Engaging parents and families
- Building student independence

Educators will be able to increase access to grade-level core instruction through the inclusion of students eligible for special education services in general education classrooms.

Resulting in improved LRE data, graduation rates, English Language Arts and math proficiency growth, and school quality or student success (SQSS) indicators for students statewide.

By Spring 2022, we aim to increase access to grade-level core instruction through the inclusion of students eligible for special education services in general education classrooms, and result in improved Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) data, as defined by Indicator 5 in the Annual Performance Report (APR) from LRE1 56.6% to LRE1 58-60%, and improved outcomes as measured by the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF), specifically in graduation rates, English Language Arts and math proficiency and growth, and SQSS indicators.

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Inclusionary Logic Model and Driver Diagram

Primary Inclusionary Drivers	Secondary Inclusionary Drivers
1. Demonstration sites Highlight high leverage and inclusionary practices in buildings around the state in order to grow and sustain educator capacity.	1.a. Utilize the expertise of Washington public education faculty, staff, and leaders
	1.b. Utilize the expertise and materials created from the University of Washington as a framework
	1.c. Demonstrate positive peer relationships
2. Pilot District Cohorts Concentrate efforts in "invited" schools and the cohorts of schools that feed into and from their school to move more students into LRE1.	2.a. Build collaboration between general education and special education teachers
	2.b. Build vertically aligned capacity and supports
	2.c. Build and demonstrate positive peer relationships
3. Statewide Professional Development Design, support, and scale statewide professional development around LRE, inclusive practices, high leverage practices and systemic supports for all students and educators.	3.a. Mentoring - The primary form of support to public school classroom teachers must be for mentors who are experts in best practices for inclusive education and differentiated/individualized instruction.
	3.b. Address professional development to 8 statewide audiences in order to include all stakeholders and create long-lasting impact and use of PD
	3.c. Concentrate PD on the 6 priorities of OSPI in special education
	3.d. Strengthen and align existing professional development and support activities
4. TIES Center Support Leverage the technical assistance of the TIES agency	4.a. Leverage this assistance to support Cohort D
	4.b. Select demonstration sites
	4.c. Increased time in general education classes
	4.d. Increased instructional effectiveness
	4.e. Increased engagement through SEL/PBIS
	4.f. Build state capacity for inclusive practices for students with significant cognitive disabilities
5. Local Professional Development Smaller grants to districts for targeted inclusive practices implementation, other drivers, and AIM statement goals.	5.a. Coordinate these grants around a menu of change ideas to strengthen and align existing professional development and support activities.
	5.b. Ensure that PD is sustainable and measurable

APPENDIX C: PILOT DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

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cstp STRENGTHENING TEACHING ONE STEP AT A TIME

Pilot District Action Plan

This Pilot Action Plan document is a required component for the iGrants Form Package 935/936 submission. The purpose of this Action Plan is to support local systems with project planning for the Inclusionary Practices Project for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years. District systems should work with identified pilot school sites to complete this template and upload it as part of the form package application.

Please contact inclusion@cstp-wa.org with questions regarding this template.

Action Plan Components

- District Inclusionary Leadership Team
- School Inclusionary Leadership Teams
- Projected Needs and Goals
- Pilot Activities Map
- Project Implementation Timeline
- Sample Implementation Timeline

District Name: _____

Pilot school sites: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(add additional rows, as needed)

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District Inclusionary Leadership Team

The district leadership team will help guide system-wide activities in support of inclusionary practices utilizing placement data collection and analysis.

Existing leadership structures may be leveraged for these discussions, and participants should be represented across content areas, pilot school sites, feeder schools, and family and community members.

Name/Role	**Name/Role**
Name/Role	**Name/Role**
Name/Role	**Name/Role**
Name/Role	**Name/Role**
Name/Role	**Name/Role**
Name/Role	**Name/Role**

(add additional rows, as needed)

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School Inclusionary Leadership Teams

Pilot school sites should also establish inclusionary practices site teams, either as new structures or within existing collaborative teams.

SCHOOL TEAM #1: _____

Team Member Name/Role	**Team Member Name/Role**
Team Member Name/Role	**Team Member Name/Role**
Team Member Name/Role	**Team Member Name/Role**

SCHOOL TEAM #2: _____

Team Member Name/Role	**Team Member Name/Role**
Team Member Name/Role	**Team Member Name/Role**
Team Member Name/Role	**Team Member Name/Role**

SCHOOL TEAM #3: _____

Team Member Name/Role	**Team Member Name/Role**
Team Member Name/Role	**Team Member Name/Role**
Team Member Name/Role	**Team Member Name/Role**

(add additional rows/pages, as needed)

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STRENGTHENING TEACHING ONE STEP AT A TIME

Projected Needs and Goals

Expected Needs: *(Based on what you know about your district and current situation, what do you think your expected needs will be in order to increase inclusionary practices and students in least restrictive environments?)*

Primary Project Beneficiaries: *(Though studies show all students benefit from inclusive practices, clearly define the target population that will be your primary focus. Be as specific as you can, depending on the level within the system in which you are working.)*

Inclusionary Practices Project Priority:
(Which of the following project priorities will your activities address? May choose more than one.)

☐ Coaching/mentoring

☐ State & local capacity to demonstrate positive peer relationships

☐ State & local capacity to utilize expertise of WA public education faculty, staff and leaders

☐ Strengthening and aligning existing professional development and support activities

☐ Engaging parents and families

☐ Building student independence

Which components of your action plan are in place to promote racial equity and language access?

In which ways does your action plan foster social/emotional development?

In which ways and how frequently will parents/guardians be informed about their school's progress towards greater inclusion? How will parent/guardian input be solicited and used to inform your approach to inclusion?

Project Goals: *(State your project goal(s) as clearly as possible.)*

Alignment/support/collaborations: *(What existing district, building, and/or broader support will your projects and activities receive? Who will be important collaborative partners to your work?)*

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cstp STRENGTHENING TEACHING ONE STEP AT A TIME

Pilot Activities Map: District- and Building-level

This activities map is provided to support the development of your project budget, spending plan, and evaluation design. Map onto this tool the project priorities and goals you identified above, and their related costs. This is also a space to be explicit about what success will look like for students and for systems, as well as how and when you will measure it. **Reminder: These project funds should be spent primarily to support educator capacity around inclusionary practices.**

Expected Outcome/Goal	Related Activities	Budget/Costs	Success Measure(s) for Pilot Goals/Activities	Timeline for Evaluation of Success

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Project Implementation Timeline

Each district will submit the timeline below for the work they plan to do for year 1 (2019-20) and year 2 (2020-21), inclusive of the projected needs and activities map completed above. To support your planning, an exemplar timeline follows this blank form. Except for the components and due dates marked **required**, the sample timeline is not intended to be a prescriptive or an exhaustive list.

2019-20 – Year 1

Fall 2019

-
-
- **Required:** By December 15, 2019, complete the District-level LRE Self-Assessment

Winter 2020

-
-
- **Required:** By February 20, 2020, submit a mid-year report with fiscal and program updates

Spring 2020

-
-
- **Required: B**y June 30, 2020, submit an end-of-year report with fiscal and program updates

2020-21 – Year 2

Fall 2020

-
-
- **Required:** By September 30, 2020, submit your Year 2 fiscal and program updates

Winter 2021

-
-
- **Required:** By February 20, 2021, submit a mid-year report with fiscal and program updates

Spring 2021

-
-
- **Required:** By June 30, 2021, submit a final project summary

Inclusionary Practices Project

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Sample Implementation Timeline

This sample timeline is provided to support your planning. Except for the components and due dates marked **required**, it is not intended to be a prescriptive or exhaustive list.

2019-20 – Year 1 Exemplar

Fall 2019 – Winter 2020

- Establish district- and building-level inclusionary teams, including members and meeting frequency.
- Conduct placement/LRE Data Analyses: district- and building-level data review, compared with state (links to LRE data sources can be found within application).
  - Data sources: special education indicators, statewide data, WSIF supports, SQSS indicators, etc.
  - Conduct a student-level LRE data review to ensure accurate LRE calculations.
  - Review disaggregated LRE data by race, eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL), language development needs, etc.
  - Establish district and building LRE baselines and identify LRE and student outcome targets for school years 2019-20 and 2020-21.
- Map existing district and building improvement initiatives (e.g., MTSS/PBIS, Schoolwide Title, School Improvement, BEST, Fellows, etc.) and identify potential alignment/support opportunities.
- Review Inclusionary Practices Theory of Action and Logic Model & Driver Diagram (also accessible in the iGrants form package).
- Through the context of the completed LRE data analyses and self-assessment(s), identify targeted priority areas and inclusionary drivers.
- Identify coaching/observation protocols and schedule ongoing observations and debrief sessions.
- Continue mapping pilot project activities and timelines, including inclusionary professional development needs/costs, travel costs, participant support costs for training of non-staff participants, staffing needed for coaching/mentoring supports, costs for release time for peer observations and debriefs, etc.
  - Complete additional vetted needs assessments, as determined by leadership team.
  - Conduct building-level needs assessment(s) to support goal setting.
- **Required Activity:** By December 15, 2019, complete the District-level LRE Self-Assessment.

Spring 2020

- Conduct review of staff guidance around placement decisions for students with disabilities.
- Identify individual case studies and/or problems of practice for pilot sites for discussion/support.
- Participate in a regional check-in with ESD and other pilot districts.
- **Required:** By February 20, 2020, submit mid-year report with fiscal and program updates.

Inclusionary Practices Project

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Sample Implementation Timeline, continued

2020-21 – Year 2 Exemplar

Fall 2020

- Adjust, as necessary, district- and building-level inclusionary leadership teams, including members and meeting frequency.
- **Required:** By September 30, 2020, submit your Year 2 fiscal and program updates.
- Revisit placement/LRE Data Analyses: district- and building-level data review, compared with state (links to LRE data sources can be found within the application).
  - Data sources: special education indicators, statewide data, WSIF supports, SQSS indicators, etc.
  - Adjust, as necessary, district and building LRE baselines and revise year 2 LRE and student outcome targets.
- Revisit district and building improvement initiatives (e.g., MTSS/PBIS, Schoolwide Title, School Improvement, BEST, Fellows, etc.) and identify additional alignment/support opportunities.

Winter 2020

- Conduct a review of staff guidance around placement decisions for students with disabilities.
- Review coaching/observation protocols and schedule ongoing observations and debrief sessions.
  - Gather input from coaches and educators on supports and needs for inclusionary practices.
- Continue mapping pilot project activities and timelines, including inclusionary professional development needs/costs, travel costs, participant support costs for training of non-staff participants, staffing needed for coaching/mentoring supports, costs for release time for peer observations and debriefs, etc.
- Review Inclusionary Practices Theory of Action and Logic Model & Driver Diagram.
  - Through the context of the updated LRE data analyses and self-assessment(s), revise targeted priority areas and inclusionary drivers.
- **Required:** By February 20, 2020, submit mid-year report with fiscal and program updates.

Spring 2021

- Participate in concluding check-ins with ESD and other pilot districts.
- Summarize results of individual case studies and/or problems of practice in individual pilot sites.
- Identify goals, activities, and supports needed for continuing and/or scaling up inclusionary practices.
- **Required:** By June 30, 2021, submit final project summary.

APPENDIX D: EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Project Design	**Y**	**N**
1. Does the project have a theory of change?		
2. Do the project documents consistently describe the theory of change?		
3. Does the project have identified targets and steps to achieve desired outcomes?		
4. Are the project targets informed by baseline data or other evidence?		
5. Do the project targets include indicators of success?		
6. Do views of project targets vary among different stakeholders?		
7. Does the project design include a method for collecting views of stakeholders?		
Information Availability	**Y**	**N**
8. Is a complete set of project documents available?		
9. Do baseline measures exist?		
10. Are there data on a control group?		
11. Is there a data collection process for project targets and indicators?		
12. Are disaggregated data available?		
13. Are interim reports collected?		
Institutional Context	**Y**	**N**
14. Are there sufficient resources (time, fiscal, personnel) for the project duration?		
15. Is there opportunity for the EA to influence project implementation?		
16. Are key stakeholders available to provide input?		
17. Is there a process for using stakeholder input to inform project implementation?		

Note. Adapted from the United Nations Programme Development (UNDP) Independent Evaluation Office (2019) and Department for International Development (Davies, 2013). In the public domain.

APPENDIX E: END-OF-YEAR REPORT PROTOCOL FOR PILOT DISTRICTS

Reflecting on the 2019-20 implementation year of the Inclusionary Practices Project:

- What were you able to accomplish this year to grow and further inclusionary practices in your buildings and district?
- Which specific activities were most impactful?
- COVID-19 presented challenges for all of us through Spring 2020. Aside from COVID-19, what were barriers or challenges you faced in implementing your IPP plans and activities?
- What are lessons learned and/or things you will do differently next school year?
- What resources or supports do you need to support your implementation efforts?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARENT PHONE INTERVIEWS

Introduction:

- To start, I would like to explain that a general education setting means at least half of the students in a class do not have an IEP, while special education means more than half of the students in a class have an IEP. Data we have from XXXXXXXX School District show that more students with disabilities are now being placed in general education settings.
- The state special education office is leading the Inclusionary Practices Project to increase inclusion in general education for students with disabilities. I am talking with families about their perspectives on inclusion.
- I am collecting this information as part of an evaluation we are doing about the project. I am also in a graduate program, and this project is part of my research.
- We will talk today for about 20 minutes. I have seven questions to ask you. The last question is a chance for you to tell me anything you would like me to know about your experience and your child's experiences.
- This conversation is confidential, so I will not share your name or your child's name. I will take notes as we talk today.

Questions:

1. What grade is your child in this year?
2. How much time does your child spend in general education?

   How satisfied are you with that amount of time in general education?
3. Do you believe your child makes more progress on their IEP goals in a general education or special education classroom?

   What led to your thinking on that?

4. How has the school and the IEP team involved you in placement decisions for your child?
5. What supports has the school offered to help you and your child feel more included in the school and the community?
6. Has the school offered activities to help you learn more about your child's disability and how to advocate for support? If so, what kinds?
7. Is there anything more you would like to tell me about your child's access to and progress in general education?